

Commentary

May 1996

Israel's Body, Israel's Soul

David Bar-Illan

Hillel Halkin

Yoram Hazony

Life With Mark

Arch Puddington

What "Operation Restore Democracy" Restored

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Countercultural Auden

Christopher Caldwell

Mourning Nancy LaMott

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WHERE THE FUTURE IS AN OPEN BOOK

Letters from Readers

A Palestinian State?

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin's comments ["Israel & the Assassination: A Reckoning," January] elegantly skirt key points involving Yitzhak Rabin's image, the peace process, and Israel's political climate.

Chiding Rabin's mourners for elevating him over other murder victims and fallen soldiers ignores the unique effects of political assassination on any society. In this case, few Israelis have matched Rabin's lifelong contributions. Mr. Halkin properly derides those who credit Rabin with expansive idealism, but applying this view to all of Rabin's backers is grasping at straws. Apart from some dreamy-eyed leftists, the "sentimentalization" derives precisely from Rabin's pragmatism. And what Mr. Halkin calls the "instant mythologization" of Rabin was evident even before

his death—certainly one could see it at the triumphant Saturday rally at which he was killed. . . .

Mr. Halkin maintains that Rabin should not have acted without a clearer national consensus. But support for the status quo was no greater than support for the peace process, and pursuing the Oslo agreements in the volatile Middle East of 1993 was no more of a decision than standing still. . . .

Mr. Halkin paints past and present political turmoil with broad brushstrokes. He makes a convenient comparison between the opposition to Rabin and the anti-Begin protests of 1982 during the Lebanon war, . . . but charging Menachem Begin with the murder of Palestinians in Lebanon was worlds removed from accusing Rabin of murdering his own civilians. . . .

The Peres government's invoking of public-order statutes seems dra-

conian until, as Mr. Halkin notes, one looks at other democracies. Judging from the example of America, which prosecutes those charged with sedition or with threatening the President, Israel's post-assassination arrests and restrictions were too little and too late. . . .

SHAI FRANKLIN
Geneva, Switzerland

TO THE EDITOR:

As someone who well remembers Hillel Halkin's January 1975 article in COMMENTARY, "Driving Toward Jerusalem," to which he refers in his most recent article, I find it difficult to believe that the two articles were written by the same man. In the earlier article—though cast in the form of a musing between conflicting views he held—Mr. Halkin put forward the inspiring ideal of "two peoples in two states . . . [in] one land" in Israel. This remains an ideal toward which indi-

viduals concerned for the future of the state of Israel should strive.

The fundamental flaw in Mr. Halkin's latest article is that he fails to pursue the implications of his statement that "an undemocratic Israel cannot prosper, no matter how much or how little land it commands." Yes. It is for this reason that opposition to the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state is ill-founded. The people in the part of the land of Israel that would eventually become a state of Palestine have conclusively demonstrated, and now voted, that a state is what they desire.

The intellectual vacuity of opponents of the peace process which Israel embarked on as a result of Yitzhak Rabin's efforts is quite surprising. Do they truly believe that the state of Israel may forever reign over the West Bank without allowing the people there the ability to deter-



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mine their own governance? It has been almost 30 years since Israel acquired this land; most residents of the West Bank were born during this time. The position of peace-process opponents that Arabs of the West Bank should remain disenfranchised is not tenable.

Opponents of the Rabin-Peres peace process—though motivated by the sincerest intentions—are not acting in Israel's best interests.

ALAN EBENSTEIN
Santa Barbara, California

TO THE EDITOR:

... I fully agree with Hillel Halkin that the Labor government erred in not being more forthcoming about the need for peace with the Palestinians. Government leaders did a terrible job of convincing their opponents—indeed, they hardly even tried. At the same time, I am puzzled by several of Mr. Halkin's points. How reasonable is it to suppose that the Right could have been convinced? What could Labor have done or said to have moved the Right away from its refusal to make peace with the PLO?

I am also astonished by Mr. Halkin's attack on Labor for violating some of the positions of its electoral platform. ... Why does he show so much anger at this? Labor did not alter its policy because it is sneaky, as he implies, but because reality ended its self-delusions. ... The power balance between Israel and the local Palestinians favored Israel so much that the local Arabs could not reasonably suppose they could get any-

thing of value in a negotiation without the support of the PLO. Labor was less than forthcoming because, like the rest of us, it did not believe the PLO was ready for peace and it fooled itself into believing that Israel could negotiate with the Palestinians without dealing with the PLO. I blame a strange combination of reasonableness and obtuseness, not chicanery, for this problem. ...

The symbolic importance of the assassination raises the meaning of the act beyond that of a normal or even an extreme political squabble. Does the political Right, especially the national-religious camp, mean to deny the legitimacy of the Israeli state? Yigal Amir's action flowed easily out of a world view whose banners labeled Rabin a "Nazi," a "traitor," and a "rodef" (pursuer). ... That is why the right-wing rabbis who discussed the question of whether or not Rabin was a *rodef* share responsibility for Amir's action. They challenged the legitimacy of Rabin's rule not only by disagreeing with his policy or calling for people to vote against him, but by positing their right to judge and convict him, even if only in principle. ... The assassination was not politics by other means.

ALAN S. ZUCKERMAN
*Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island*

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin is the most eloquent, elegant, and brilliant essayist and journalist in Israel. In "Israel & the Assassination: A Reckoning" he

presents persuasive arguments against the so-called "peace process" and its supporters. He debunks the hagiography that followed Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, and exposes the Labor party's role in creating a rift in Israel. It is, therefore, utterly astonishing that he still advocates the establishment of another Arab state along Israel's 1967 borders—effectively refuting his own best arguments.

Mr. Halkin reminds me of all those unregenerate Marxists who, when confronted with the reality that economic chaos and brutal repression have been the hallmarks of every single Communist nation, maintain that though the leaders might be bad, Communism itself is still a noble goal. When Mr. Halkin hears the murderous, anti-Israel ranting of the Arabs of Gaza and Judea and Samaria, can he possibly think that territorial compromise is still viable?

RUTH S. KING
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

... I will not attempt to respond to Hillel Halkin's insistence that he still believes in the blessings of Palestinian statehood, an idea that is completely dissonant with all his other insights. ... After all, Israel is a democracy where people can believe whatever they wish. ... I simply wonder whether an *intifada* launched in Israel's Galilee and Negev would convince him that *those* areas need to become Arab states as well.

STEVEN PLAUT
*University of Haifa
Haifa, Israel*

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin, who classifies himself as on the Left, is typical of the species in that he has long believed—for twenty years, he says—in the existence of a Palestinian people whose land is "occupied" by Israel. ...

In actual fact, Israel is not, nor has it ever been, an "occupier." It held lands to which it had a valid claim. When Israel first entered these lands in 1967, in defending itself and fighting for its existence, it crossed no international border. ... But then, leftists are not easily daunted by facts. ...

On the other hand, Mr. Halkin is also an atypical leftist. As was said about Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra*, "What willingly he did confound, *he wail'd*." Accordingly, Mr. Halkin... wails that Israel is now in grave danger from its Arab neighbors and that it will be difficult to bring together a people that he has helped to sunder. ...

The road ahead will be difficult. But what will make it quadruply more difficult is that I do not think that to this day the Halkins realize the tragic enormity of their error.

DAVID BASCH
West Hartford, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin... erroneously states that a putative Palestinian state in all of the West Bank and Gaza "would comprise... 23 percent of the area of British Mandate Palestine." In fact, Transjordan, the area east of the Jordan River, which constituted 77 percent of British Mandatory Palestine, remained subject to



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the Mandate until it gained its independence in 1946 as the state of Jordan. The areas referred to as the West Bank and Gaza total only about 5 percent of the area of the British Mandate. . . .

ROGER A. GERBER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

We are indebted to Hillel Halkin for his vital insights into the catastrophe of present Israeli government policy. . . . Mr. Halkin says that what made the assassination of Rabin "exceptionally atrocious" was not its being a murder but its being a cataclysmic political blunder. But the use of the word "blunder" here implies that the assassin was acting as a chosen agent of the opposition in Israel (Likud, the settlers of Judea and Samaria, etc.), and the assassination had been decided on by opposition elements to further their "political" objectives. This is obviously an implication Mr. Halkin does not wish to make. . . . I believe it is conceded even by the Rabin-Peres faction that the assassination was not carried out as a political measure by the opposition but was the desperate act of one distraught, unbalanced individual, driven to it by events rather than rhetoric. . . .

I am more concerned, however, about Mr. Halkin's readily acknowledged advocacy, going back some twenty years, of "a Palestinian state along Israel's 1967 borders"—a conviction of which he now writes, "I still hold to it today." It seems to me that if one capitulates to the assiduously fostered propa-

ganda myth of a "Palestinian people" to mean only Arabs in the western part of the former British Mandate (excluding the Jews who live there and the Arabs of Jordan), and if one then goes on to advocate the establishment of a Palestinian state based on that propaganda myth, then one's analysis of Israel's present "cruel dilemma" and "torment," to use Mr. Halkin's words, becomes blunted. . . .

What is needed now is the courage to reject the myth of the Palestinian people, and to put the grotesquely misnamed "peace process" on hold for an agonizing reappraisal of the unfolding catastrophe. . . .

DAVID L. HURWITZ
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

. . . Hillel Halkin is mistaken in crediting Yesha-yahu Leibowitz with the invention of the term "Judeo-Nazi." It was common currency among anti-Semites in British official circles in the Middle East as early as 1941. In 1944, for example, Edward Grigg, British Minister in Cairo, advised Anthony Eden that partition would "bring into existence a Jewish Nazi-state."

Other locutions and practices beloved by large segments of the Israeli Left, ranging from references to Jewish settlers as bloodsuckers and parasites, to the cutting of the *payot* (earlocks) of Orthodox boys and assaulting Jews wearing *kippot* (skullcaps), are also highly derivative of past European traditions. But what is now frowned upon or even illegal in Europe, where the

Holocaust gave anti-Semitism a bad name, can be said and done with impunity in Israel and is no bar to membership in the Knesset or the cabinet. Was it for this, as they say, that we needed a Jewish state?

EDWARD ALEXANDER
Seattle, Washington

TO THE EDITOR:

I was very impressed by the anger Hillel Halkin felt and the accuracy with which he described the aftermath of the Rabin assassination. Never before have I witnessed the type of cynical, "in-your-face" reaction to a national tragedy as occurred in Israel after the assassination.

It took less than twelve hours for the cynicism to begin, starting with a famous poet's statement on television that he did not want national unity but wanted instead to keep Likud out of power for a long time, going on to charges that the party leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, was the man behind the murder, and then to a rounding-up of rabbis that was reminiscent of other times and places. . . .

At the end of his article, Hillel Halkin says: "Only a wise politics can help to join again what a foolish politics has helped to sunder," and then asks, "Can one, in today's circumstances, imagine a politics wise enough?" To answer his question: a politics wise enough to help us will occur only if Israeli politicians of all stripes start thinking in terms of "my country first" instead of "my party right or wrong."

IRA SLOMOWITZ
Kfar Saba, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

I write to congratulate COMMENTARY on Hillel Halkin's "Israel & the Assassination: A Reckoning"—nowhere have I read an article so clear-thinking and courageous.

DOROTHEA STRAUS
New York City

HILLEL HALKIN writes:

I wish to thank all those who have written and to apologize for not replying in what follows to each of their individual criticisms. In some cases, a more careful reading of what I wrote would have prevented me from being accused of things I never said (among them that I am a "leftist"—what on earth, besides my admission to having voted for the Labor party in 1992, could have led to such a curious conclusion?). In one instance, concerning the apprehensions I expressed over what Shai Franklin calls "the Peres government's invoking of public-order statutes" in the wake of the assassination, I am happy to concede that my fears were exaggerated. For the rest, I prefer not to rehash points already made by me; readers of COMMENTARY can compare these with the arguments brought against them and decide for themselves.

Rather, I would like to use this space to deal with a matter that I referred to in my article only in passing, but that a number of readers chose to comment on at greater length—namely, my position on the question of a Palestinian state.

Alan Ebenstein is of course wrong, and Ruth S. King, Steven Plaut, and David L. Hurwitz are

right. "Subject to certain conditions," as I wrote in these pages in January, I am in favor of statehood for the Palestinians. Why am I, and what are the conditions?

Contrary to what Mrs. King writes, I am not for a Palestinian state because it is a "noble goal"; the goal of a Jewish state in an undivided land of Israel, were it realizable, seems to me nobler. And contrary to what Mr. Plaut writes, I do not believe that a Palestinian state will necessarily be a blessing; as I made clear in my article, I am well aware that it could be a curse. And contrary to what Mr. Hurwitz writes, although I do happen to think that the Palestinians by now have a national identity that makes them a people, I do not believe that this automatically entitles them to statehood; many peoples with more ancient national identities, such as the Welsh and the Catalans, are doing very nicely without states. I believe that the Palestinians should have a state for one overriding reason only: because it is the least bad of a number of bad alternatives.

What are the other, worse ones? At the risk of repeating what most people know, there are—and have been since 1967—three of them. The first is for the nearly two million Palestinians in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza to continue living under Jewish rule. This could be done either by politically enfranchising them—in which case, along with the million Arabs who are today Israeli citizens, Palestinians would comprise nearly two-fifths of the voting

population of Israel, and even more in the future because of a birth rate far higher than the Jewish one; or by not enfranchising them, so that, with the passing of the old South Africa, Israel would permanently become the world's only country that functioned as a democracy toward one part of its population and a dictatorship toward another.

The second alternative is forcibly to expel the Palestinians living in the territories, whether by trucking them to the Jordanian or Lebanese borders, or by stampeding them through a systematic campaign of terror. Is this feasible behavior for a small democracy that is heavily dependent economically and politically on larger democ-

racies like the United States? Even on the nationalistic Right, no one in Israel short of the lunatic fringe seems to think so.

The third and last alternative, once known as "the Jordanian option," is to return most or all of the West Bank to the Hashemite rule that it was under between 1948 and 1967. But apart from the fact that few Palestinians support this solution and that the Jordanian government lost interest in it years ago, Palestinians are a majority of Jordan's population and would be an even larger one with the addition of the West Bank. The Hashemite dynasty will not last forever; if it should fall and be replaced by a Palestinian-controlled regime, why, in terms of

the threat to Israel, would a large and potentially powerful Palestinian state stretching to the Iraqi, Syrian, and Saudi borders be preferable to a small, weak one surrounded by Israel on all sides?

Nor do I think that the Palestinian demand for a state is without justice. The Palestinians *have* suffered greatly and not always through their own fault; they have been dispossessed by Israel—and as a Jew, I am glad of this—from parts of their traditional territory; and if their deep sense of grievance and humiliation, and their understandable wish to conduct their own affairs, can be even partly assuaged by granting them a state that will not greatly endanger Israel and Jewish



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interests, this seems to me the best option.

Is such a state imaginable? Without minimizing the risks, especially when dealing with political thugs like Yasir Arafat and his PLO henchmen, to whom the Rabin government foolishly and prematurely opened the gates of Gaza and the West Bank, I think it is—provided that certain conditions are met and that Israel has the long-term resolve to insist on serious compliance with them. These are:

1. An all-out fight by the Palestinian Authority against terror. Until such a war is waged, and decisively won, the Palestinians do not deserve a state and should not get one.

2. Total and permanent demilitarization. The Palestinians would have to agree in return for statehood never to expand their police force beyond its already bloated numbers, never to acquire heavy weapons, and never to enter into military agreements with other Arab nations.

3. A permanent Israeli military presence in the Jordan Valley, along the border between the Palestinian state and Jordan. Only such a presence could enforce demilitarization, prevent a possible Jordanian-Palestinian *Anschluss*, and allow Israel to control the economic and geographical choke-points needed to guarantee that a Palestinian state would honor its commitments.

4. Open borders between Israel and the Palestinian state that would allow for the free and uninhibited movement of people, goods, and workers in both directions. I know that at the moment, after

years of PLO-condoned Hamas terror, this is not a popular idea in Israel; most Israelis would like to see a solid wall, the thicker and higher the better, between Israel and a Palestinian entity. But in the long run, I do not think that a bunkerized Israel living next to a ghettoized Palestine could bring material prosperity or emotional and cultural well-being to either people, and Jews should anyway refuse to accept a situation in which they would need permits or visas to live in or visit parts of the Land of Israel.

5. The retention *in situ* of all Jewish settlements in the Palestinian territories. A strong Jewish civilian presence in Judea and Samaria is necessary, in my opinion, to ensure that the Jewish historic connection with these areas remains unbroken; that the borders between Israel and a Palestinian state stay open; and that the Palestinian government passes the daily litmus test of protecting the Jews living under its jurisdiction and treating them fairly, which is also the best guarantee that it would act similarly with its own Arab citizens.

6. The establishment in the Palestinian Authority, as a prerequisite for the granting of statehood, of a genuine, Western-style democracy with a functioning parliament and the same civil freedoms that exist in Israel, Europe, and America. I have no illusions about the ease with which this could be done in an Arab and Muslim culture; but in my contacts with Palestinians in recent years, I have been surprised and impressed both

by their fear and distrust of their own leadership and by the strength of their desire for the democratic rights enjoyed by Israelis—from whom, it turns out, they have learned a great deal more than Israel ever tried to teach them. Only a democratic Palestine could be counted on to live peacefully beside Israel; and two such democracies existing side by side in a region otherwise controlled by authoritarian regimes might develop joint interests that could act as a cohesive force between them.

Are these conditions utopian? Many people may think so, and should they be proved right, I for one would be quite willing to postpone Palestinian statehood for utopian times and seek other ways of muddling through the interim. Would such a state guarantee us against the danger of Palestinian irredentism that Steven Plaut fears? No, it would not; the danger would be real and would have to be combated—in part, by making Israeli Arabs more equal partners in their country than they are now.

If Mr. Plaut, Mr. Hurwitz, and Mrs. King have better ideas, I would be glad to hear them. On the whole, I think that too much time has been expended on arguing the pros and cons of Palestinian statehood in the abstract, and too little time on debating the particulars of just what kind of Palestinian state might be desirable for Israel, just what kind might not be, and just what Israel can and should do to help bring into being the first kind. It would be wise to begin thinking se-

riously about these things while our thoughts might still do some good.

Balance of Power

TO THE EDITOR:

Mark Helprin, in "For a New Concert of Europe" [January], sets out at length the case I made against NATO expansion eastward in my response, published in your June 1994 letters section, to George Weigel's "Creeping Talbottism" [March 1994]: that expansion would insult and thus enrage Russia without slowing it down—indeed, without any likelihood of useful steps being taken to slow it down. Although Mr. Helprin is correct on this point, he makes a partial theoretical error which prevents him from perceiving a strategy for solving the problem he poses, the problem of maintaining long-term peace in Europe. Yes, balance of power and geography matter in ways the Clinton team does not seem to fathom, but Mr. Helprin's reference to possible future German domination of Central Europe as a balance-of-power problem on the order of a resurgent Russia betrays a misconception concerning where and when to apply a balance-of-power analysis.

Although Francis Fukuyama's Hegelian explanation for the phenomenon does not convince me, in *The End of History and the First Man* he proves that balance of power as understood since Thucydides does not apply in relations among liberal (which includes socialist) democra-

cies. Moreover, liberal democracies pose no imperial threat in the traditional balance-of-power sense. That is, where war has become unthinkable as a means of settling a dispute or achieving an end, traditional balance-of-power analysis loses its ability to explain. . . .

But in Central Europe, where liberal democracies confront nonliberal non-democracies, the balance of power continues. With the East Germans incorporated into it, Germany is more pacifist than it was before unification. . . . In most Central European countries the U.S. is as important economically as Germany. . . . There are about 50,000 Americans and 50,000 Germans living in Prague. Well, not exactly. The Americans live there and the Germans work there during the week and go home on weekends to their families in Germany. Some conquerors. And the Czechs complain about the Germans not moving their families to Prague! Things have changed a bit there since October 1938.

Yet Mr. Helprin does not fully appreciate that change and how it indicates the best solution to the very real problems of ethnic tension in Central Europe and Russian unpredictability he describes. He writes a lengthy article on the problem of maintaining peace without once mentioning a key institution: the European Union. Yes, the EU currently lacks a meaningful military dimension and possesses strong statist tendencies. . . . Yet for all that, the EU plays a crucial role in a two-prong strategy for

Central Europe: (1) foster Central European aspirations to EU membership in order to dampen ethnic conflict; and (2) have NATO coordinate militarily with Central Europe on a hub-spoke model to provide it with a porcupine defense against Russia but without giving that cooperation a name.

EU aspirations may do for Central European ethnic problems what NATO membership did to minimize overt Greek-Turkish hostilities. The EU applies even more stringent political and economic membership standards than does NATO. Any aspiring EU member knows that if it persecutes its minorities too severely or threatens a neighbor too overtly on behalf of its own ethnics there, it will set back its EU membership date incalculably. If, in addition, EU membership were made a prerequisite to obtaining an openly acknowledged Western military shield, much potential Central European mischief might be avoided.

As for Central European "neutrality," remember that no one who counted militarily was fooled by official Swedish cold-war neutrality. Sweden made no preparations for invasion by the West. Yet if the Soviets had invaded Finland, the Swedes would have assisted the Finns and NATO aided the Swedes. . . . Thus, non-member Sweden played a more important role in NATO than member Belgium.

Achieving similar results in Central Europe will not be as easy, for relationships among neighboring Central European

states do not mimic those between the Swedes and the Finns. One should remember, however, that Finland has a Swedish-speaking minority about which Sweden is still sensitive. Yet hostilities on that or any other score between Sweden and Finland are unthinkable. This is what Central Europe must strive for. . . .

The beauty of this . . . porcupine strategy is that it does not require enough strength to prevail; it requires only that the prize not be worth the pain. Pain is relative. As Mr. Helprin points out, the West has no choice but to cede Russia a southern and eastern imperium. With Western help, Central Europe must make itself less enticing than prey elsewhere. . . .

The membership carrot the EU can dangle to encourage peace in Central Europe can ultimately be extended to Russia as well. By the time it could meet the stringent economic and political criteria for EU membership, Central European military preparation for Russian attack could fall to the current level of Dutch, Belgium, and Danish preparation for German attack—zero. Traditional balance-of-power considerations would no longer be an internal European concern.

DOUGLAS HOFFMAN
Chicago, Illinois

MARK HELPRIN writes:

A book reviewer in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* once accused me of imitating a book that she dearly loved—I suspect that she was obsessed with it—a book of which I had never heard, by a writer of whom

I had never heard. She then proceeded to excoriate me for insufficiently conveying the essence of it. In fact, the implication was that my counterfeit was so bad that it was virtually unrecognizable, and that only a lunatic would mistake it for the object of my emulation.

I know the Kabuki formulations of learned correspondence, in which, like pre-revolutionary French aristocrats with artificial birthmarks, the author of a letter lavishes ritual praise upon an opponent whose throat he then slits, but this is now largely confined to the academic world, of which I am not a part. So let me say as directly as I can that I am not in the business of fleshing out even letters that I have read, much less those that I haven't, and that this is especially easy to demonstrate in the cases where my argument apparently fails to resemble the one I attempt to "set out at length."

I would love to take credit for the many glories of the balance of power to which I pointed in my essay, but that would be indecent, for the credit belongs neither to me nor to Douglas Hoffman. It belongs to Lord Castlereagh. It belongs to Edward Gulick, author of *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*. It belongs to Metternich, and to Churchill, and to Marlborough.

But evidently we can dismiss them, and history as well, as it has come to an end. The conduct of nations in alliance, in the international system, in competition, and at war has been forever changed. And how do we know this?

We know it (according to Mr. Hoffman) *because Francis Fukuyama proved it*. In the onward march of political science we can rest our analysis upon this certainty and proceed to ignore how the world has operated throughout history. The penalty for hubris like this has yet to be exacted, but it undoubtedly will be, because it always has been.

Who guarantees that liberal democracy will always prevail in Western Europe, especially in Germany? And how is it possible to conclude from the peaceful relations among the states of Western Europe since World War II that they will not revert to a pattern of rivalry? Has no thought been given to the obvious fact that their naturally diverging interests were disciplined by and subsumed in their defensive alliance against the countries of the East? For the past half-century, the countries of Europe have, with the certainty of celestial bodies, functioned as the individual components of a balance of power. They are at this very moment coalescing into a new system, even if its ultimate shape is not apparent. I understand why some deny this. After World War II many thought in much the same way. History had finally run itself out. The old forces were spent. Nothing would ever be the same again. International relations would be recast and controllable, with their birthplace Flushing Meadows.

Is it not terribly repetitious to have to run through these illusions again and again and again?

I must report that I myself am thoroughly fatigued by those with commercial interests abroad who argue that war is a thing of the past because business is booming. World War I was not supposed to happen, because of the intense levels of trade between what then became the combatants. Oilmen in Teheran had the same confidence in the rule of the Shah.

I do not feel at all remiss in leaving out the European Union. The design I propose requires a strong Western defense, for which the initials are not EU but NATO. Initials and acronyms aside, a balance of power cannot be achieved or assured by institutions. Rather, it is a result of the realistic alignment of nations. A bureaucracy masquerading as a principle cannot be half as agile, flexible, or powerful as is required to maintain the equilibrium among sovereign states. The United Nations has been throughout its history an excellent example of this.

The idea that association with the EU, like NATO, would help to guarantee the peace by dampening ethnic conflicts is objectionable on two counts. First, it ignores the ethnic conflicts that exist at the moment within the EU and/or NATO, which are most familiar in the guise of the Irish, Basque, and Kurdish "liberation" movements. Second, it ascribes to ethnicity too great a role in bringing about wars. Ethnic struggles will always exist. Their influence swells only when the international system is sufficiently out of balance to

let such things tip it into war.

Mr. Hoffman's dismissal of an intermediary system of neutral states is based upon his dismissal of neutrality itself, the impossibility of which he argues by asserting that "if the Soviets had invaded Finland, the Swedes would have assisted the Finns and NATO aided the Swedes." Of course the Soviets would never have set foot in Finland except to cross Lapland into Sweden, but had they for some reason been desirous of confining their efforts to capturing the Finnish countryside, you could, as they say in my neighborhood, "make book" on the fact that Sweden would not have lifted a finger, any more than it entered World War II after Hitler invaded Norway. What it did do was sell war materiel to Germany and then emerge in the postwar period to lecture the United States on morality. Furthermore, if the Swedes would have been so insane as to have gone to war with the Soviet Union over Finnish sovereignty, you can make even more book on the fact that NATO—which includes presumably sober nuclear powers such as this country and Britain—would not have come to Sweden's aid.

Neutrality can and does exist. Without it, Finland and Austria would have experienced a different fate, Switzerland would have been swallowed by Germany, and the Irish Republic by Britain during the two world wars. But neutrality is not the heart of the matter. Balance is—balance, which in interna-

tional relations is almost a metaphysical subject, and is less and less understood in a world increasingly hostile to its own past. Castlereagh's intermediary system accomplished in the 19th century exactly what I propose for a similar system in a new concert of Europe. The proof of its success exists, overflowing in the reality of history. I am, therefore, amazed when Mr. Hoffman says that I fail to perceive "a strategy for solving the problem [I] pose, the problem of maintaining long-term peace in Europe." But, then again, amazement is one of life's great entertainments.

Quebec

TO THE EDITOR:

As a former fellow-columnist of William Watson on the *Toronto Financial Post*, I have always admired his work. And his essay, "As Quebec Goes . . ." [February], was interesting as always. But his conclusion that the independence of Quebec would amount to "linguistic and political apartheid" is more sad evidence of the utter inability of contemporary intellectuals—even sensible ones, even sensible *conservative* ones—to handle the reality of nationalism and the nation-state.

In retrospect, the surprise is not that Quebec is moving to independence, but that it took so long. A nation is an interlacing of ethnicity and culture. It is not exclusively ethnic, which is why individuals and even groups—"MacGregor or Schwartz," in Mr. Watson's fraught ter-

minology—can assimilate over time. Quebec is neither the most nor the least welcoming to outsiders. But a nation is not entirely cultural, either, and it is certainly not just a matter of acceding to a creed, despite the insistent assertions of contemporary intellectuals and enthusiasts for current U.S. immigration policy.

The emergence of nation-states as the political expression of individual nations is not an atavism but a response to modernity. When Quebec francophones finally modernized, which for various reasons was delayed until after World War II, the curious compromise by which they existed in Canada “like a mammoth frozen in the tundra,” in Goldwin Smith’s phrase, became simply unworkable.

Nationality, and especially its ethnic underpinning, embarrasses contemporary intellectuals. And there is no doubt that the position of minorities in an emerging nation-state is delicate. But neither problem is a good reason to deny or frustrate what is plainly comforting and necessary to the majority.

Nevertheless, the history of the 20th century is one of repeated attempts by intellectuals to deny and frustrate nationalism, through the invention of syncretic polities like the USSR, Yugoslavia, the European Union, and, since the 1960’s, the reinvented “bilingual, bicultural” Canada. But nationalism remains an elemental force. If he stays in Quebec, Mr. Watson’s future is that of an Anglo-Argentinian.

I derive a certain wry

amusement from all this. In 1986 I had a small cult success with a book on Canadian politics (*The Patriot Game: Canada and the Canadian Question Revisited*), which actually did predict, on the basis of the analysis outlined above, the resurgence of Quebec nationalism as well as the collapse of the then-dominant Progressive Conservative party’s electoral coalition and the emergence of a new, right-wing protest party in the West. In the U.S., to my dismay, I got more reviews from mainstream publications than from several conservative-intellectual journals run by personal friends. (COMMENTARY later ran an article, based on the book, about the very real negative public-choice con-

sequences of institutional bilingualism on the unilingual majority [“A Cautionary Case of Bilingualism,” November 1987]. This is an aspect of Canadian politics that Mr. Watson, as a bilingual Montreal Anglo, naturally has not noticed.)

One sterling exception was Patrick J. Buchanan. He understood my point exactly, and not only discussed *The Patriot Game* in two columns, but even tried to get CNN to agree to a TV special on Canada—a heroic ambition, as I am sure Mr. Watson will appreciate.

If any COMMENTARY readers wonder why Buchanan has so effectively resisted exorcism, they need look no further than this superior understanding of

what motivates peoples, and history.

PETER BRIMELOW
National Review
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

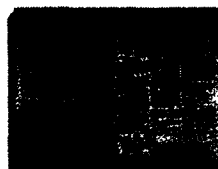
William Watson’s newspaper columns usually sparkle when the subject is economics, yet he somehow has never managed to come to grips with Quebec. His latest effort lamely repeats the standard opinions one hears from Montreal anglophones. For example, he attributes the historically low French-Canadian participation in the business world to “insufficient schooling.” Had he been writing about, say, Indonesia, where ethnic Chinese overwhelmingly dominate the private sec-

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COMPI

tor, I suspect he would have seen through that sort of nonsense. Most of Montreal's locally based private sector, apart from the head offices of national and multinational corporations, has been built by uneducated immigrants or their sons. . . .

Mr. Watson claims that social conventions have changed to the point where conversations between parties who are not acquainted begin in French, and "it is not uncommon to see anglophone strangers continuing on in French, neither willing to cede one-upmanship." He states that this takes place "even outside commerce," as if somehow the scenario applies even more to the business world. Perhaps it happens within the politically-correct confines of McGill University or in the surreal corporate world called "Quebec Inc.," where francophone companies bask in government subsidies and contracts. . . . But in the real world of business, where Montreal supplies the world with innovative or just plain competitive products and services, French is sometimes spoken on the job, mostly where there happen to be several French Canadians in the same department, though they switch to English in the presence of others—but then one hears a fair amount of Cantonese, Arabic, and Russian, too. I am told that the official language of work at the Montreal head office of at least one major French multinational corporation is English. . . .

Among French Canadians, MBA courses are now all the rage, but the

graduates end up in or around the public sector or as administrative or technical executives in Anglo companies. French-Canadian nationalists, whom one would intuitively expect to show some pride in their successful entrepreneurs, continually vilify them. . . .

Mr. Watson and most anglophone Canadians fail to appreciate the cultural gulf between themselves and French Canadians. English Montreal is so utterly bourgeois that Samuel Butler turned the city into a synonym for philistinism with his savage refrain, *O God! O Montreal!* By contrast, the French Canadians, having only recently abandoned what was surely the world's most ultramontane Catholic church, still have a visceral aversion to the marketplace. Legislated bilingualism and massive transfer payments, justified by the mythical threat of separation, have staved off the acceptance of capitalism as morally desirable. . . .

A lot of nonsense on the subject of Quebec and Canada has appeared in American journals, *Left* and *Right*. The one exception was Thomas Sowell's inclusion of Quebec in his masterful study of affirmative action around the world, which first appeared in *COMMENTARY*, "Affirmative Action: A Worldwide Disaster" [December 1989].

Your readers deserve better than William Watson's superficial take.

LIONEL ALBERT
Hampstead, Quebec, Canada

TO THE EDITOR:

William Watson reviews the unhappy state of

affairs in Quebec, which exists despite the fact that, as he puts it, "most Canadians think of themselves as having built by far the superior society"—superior, that is, to that of their southern neighbor.

That there is a serious conflict between anglophones and francophones in Quebec is scarcely novel to anyone with the least acquaintance with that beautiful but troubled province. But the racism and anti-Semitism that bubble just beneath the surface of Quebec's society go far beyond anything adumbrated in Mr. Watson's article. It is worth noting that Montreal's Jewish population has declined by 20 percent in the last 25 years. Premier Jacques Parizeau's blatant accusation immediately after the recent vote that the defeat of the independence referendum was caused by "big money and ethnic groups" reflects a widespread sentiment. The Jews of Quebec, more attuned than most North Americans to the nuances of anti-Semitism, are fully aware of the threat inherent in such words.

When I entered Canada as a landed immigrant some years ago to serve as a visiting professor at one of Montreal's major universities, one of the first questions put to me by the immigration officer at the border was, "What is your religion?" When I recovered from my shock and told him that I was Jewish, he checked "Protestant" on the immigration document he was preparing. In response to my protest, he explained that since Jews pay their school taxes to the Protestant School

Board of Montreal rather than to the other (Catholic) public-school system, we were classed as Protestants for purposes of taxation. . . .

In order to get assistance while we were unpacking, we called the government employment agency. A few minutes into the conversation, we were told by the French-Canadian agent on the other end of the line, "You sound like such a nice family. I don't think you would like a black woman from the islands. I will send you a nice French-Canadian girl." We were astounded. Such a statement would have resulted in an instant lawsuit, and probably swift dismissal of the employee, where we came from. But it was evident that we were now in a society with different standards, and that such racial discrimination was practiced by the very government that should have been fighting it.

Only last week, a black student at the law school in which I now teach told me that because she was black, she had no chance at all of being admitted to the law school in her home town, Toronto. Discrimination against black students in professional schools in Toronto, Montreal, and other major Canadian cities is open and notorious, she said. . . .

At least since the Vietnam war, the Canadian government, reflecting the sentiments of a substantial part of the people it represents, has generally had a supercilious attitude toward the United States. . . . American foreign policy is derided while Canada panders to and does business

with dictators of every stripe. We are wildly, emotionally nationalistic, they say, while Canada is so civilized as to be above such primitive attitudes.

Well, Canada is a splendid country, and Montreal and the rest of Quebec constitute a very special corner of North America with a unique and colorful culture. Nothing much is to be gained by comparing the societies of two nations that maintain friendly relations most of the time. We can afford to allow the Canadians to believe that their society is superior to ours if it pleases them to do so. They have their problems and we have ours. We both struggle, as best we can, to solve those that are most nettlesome. For now, I am glad that my friends in Montreal can live for a few more years secure in the feeling that they still reside in Canada. If I were in their shoes, however, I would be thinking seriously about how to leave Quebec before Jacques Parizeau and his followers achieve their dream of "*le Québec aux Québécois*."

BURTON M. LEISER
*Pace University
Pleasantville, New York*

TO THE EDITOR:

... I was born in Winnipeg, Canada, and grew up as a Jew in that city in the 1940's. In 1951 at the age of twenty-one, I left Canada for graduate work in history at Princeton because I saw no future for myself in Canada. I looked around in my senior year at the University of Manitoba and noticed that there was not one Jew teaching in a history department in the whole

country. The head of the department at the University of Toronto, Canada's premier university, was in fact a publicly outspoken anti-Semite. Of course I knew that in French-speaking universities in Quebec, 1930's-style Catholic fascism prevailed. That was not what worried me. It was the situation in the English-speaking universities that concerned me.

At these places, as in the rest of Canada's cultural institutions (the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation [CBC], the newspapers, etc.), it was mostly people of Scots-Presbyterian background who prevailed. They were well-educated, intelligent men (rarely women), and liberal-Left in their politics, usually. They provided Canada with very good cheap colleges, very good newspapers, a radio network that was excellent in many ways (especially music and drama). But the members of the Scots-Presbyterian elite had an important flaw that I constantly experienced. They were cultural chauvinists and racists, who looked down on anyone who was not of British, preferably Scottish, stock and committed to the Protestant faith. I rightly saw no future for myself in a country run by this capable but narrow-minded and prejudiced elite. I got out as soon as I could, and so did all but one of the ten Jewish boys I grew up with in Winnipeg—most are now physicians in the U.S., three are in Israel.

If I felt the whiplash of the master class in Canada, the Scots-Presbyterian elite, how much worse in a

way was it for the French-Catholic middle class in Quebec, especially in Montreal? Their ancestors had been in the country long before the Scottish immigrants came in the 19th century. By the Quebec Act of 1774 and subsequent constitutional legislation they were supposed to have equal citizenship with the Scots and the other British people, and French was supposed to be a public language along with English. In practice, in the 1940's none of that was occurring. The francophones in Quebec were in effect second- (or maybe third-) class citizens in their own country, ruled over by the Montreal Scottish elite from such vantage points as McGill University, the *Montreal Gazette*, the dominant English-language service of the CBC, and the executive levels of the great banks, insurance companies, and department stores.

Is it any wonder now that the deep resentment carried over from the post-colonial days of the 1940's burns among the educated French middle class in Montreal and other Quebec cities; that, reckless and foolish or not, they are determined to break free of Canada and its heritage of Scots-Presbyterian culture and its Scots-British master class? Assuredly a Jew can understand such things, as much as we see in the Québécois leaders the ugly face of 1930's French Catholic fascism.

Sooner or later Quebec will become independent and Canada will disintegrate. Yes, the French are to blame, but so is the Scots-Presbyterian elite

for its narrowness and racism and pitiless contempt for other ethnic and cultural groups in the Canada of four decades ago. . . .

NORMAN F. CANTOR
*New York University
New York City*

WILLIAM WATSON writes:

After the century we have just been through, I should have thought it would not be just intellectuals who were nervous about nationalism. In Quebec, such nervousness can only have increased after Jacques Parizeau's disgraceful "us-vs.-them" speech on the night of the referendum, for which neither he nor anyone in authority in his party has yet apologized.

Even so, I did stress that the ethnic state is hardly an aberration; if history had put two countries north of the United States instead of one, no one would be surprised. Peter Brimelow predicts that this is what history is about to do, and perhaps he is right. Whether it *should* do this is another question. Here I take my cue from Edmund Burke: "It is with infinite caution that any man ought to venture upon pulling down an edifice which has answered in any tolerable degree the common purposes of society." Canada has served the common purposes of society more than tolerably well. It remains to be seen whether it can provide the constitutional, institutional, and psychological comforts its French-speaking minority, formerly a third of its population, now less than a quarter, requires. That Quebec has voted twice

against secession suggests many Quebecers think it can.

If an analysis which does not indulge in the easy ethnic stereotyping Lionel Albert finds so instructive—English Montrealers are irremediably bourgeois, Catholic-French Quebecers inevitably corporatist—is superficial, then I admit to superficiality. In fact, a number of Canada's most aggressive and entrepreneurial business people are francophone, while I spend most of my professional life as an economist trying to persuade English Canadians that they do not need the succor of as large a government as they have grown accustomed to over the last four decades. As for "standard opinions," it is now a standard finding in Canadian labor economics that the wage gap between anglophones and francophones has been closed in large part because differences in the educational attainment of the two groups have been all but eliminated.

During the referendum campaign, the separatist leader Lucien Bouchard argued that Quebec needed to be its own country so as to be sheltered from the cold, Reaganite, un-Quebec-like winds blowing in English Canada. But now, as provincial Premier, he is about to make drastic budget cuts in order to repair the province's balance sheet. He promises these cuts will be achieved much more humanely than in Ontario and Alberta. We shall see.

Though only a third-generation Canadian, I am a Scots-Presbyterian and therefore not the best per-

son to comment on Norman F. Cantor's recollections of his native land. But let me note that the separatist vote is lower among the older generation which actually experienced anglophone *hauteur* than it is among young Quebecers who, though ethnic enmity is not altogether absent from today's Montreal, are much less likely to have been told to "speak white" or denied employment or respect because of their language or ethnicity. The fathers seem content not to visit the sins of their generation on their children. It is the children who will not let go. It is also worth noting that among francophones the separatist vote is lower in Montreal, where anglophones and francophones actually coexist, than in rural Quebec, where anglophones are about as common as a snowless winter.

I hope Burton M. Leiser does not think that in citing Canadians' sense of moral superiority to Americans, one of the least attractive of my country's attributes, I meant to endorse it. We may not have beams in our eyes, but we have many largish motes, a point I elaborate at some length in a forthcoming book. At the same time, his student's story about not being admitted to law school in Toronto, a city riven by political correctness, is simply preposterous. I am not acquainted with many Toronto law students, but three I do know of are black. Because of the city's diverse ethnic make-up, those busy UN rankers have named it—improbably, given its Scots-Presbyterian histo-

ry—one of the world's most cosmopolitan cities.

Finally, I should mention that what Mr. Brimelow calls my "fraught terminology [of] MacGregor or Schwartz" is not mine but Mordechai Richler's, and what Richler actually said was "Ginzberg and MacGregor" (we Scots-Presbyterians evidently remember our own but get other people confused).

Jewish Continuity

TO THE EDITOR:

The prescription for saving American Jews reached by Jack Wertheimer, Charles S. Liebman, and Steven M. Cohen ["How to Save American Jews," January] is as troubling as it is thought-provoking. . . . The authors wish to focus on the 44 percent of American Jews who they estimate are religiously engaged and neglect the other 56 percent. This abandonment wounds the Jewish conscience. Having lost a third of its numbers in Europe and an ever-increasing amount through low birth rates, intermarriage, and assimilation in this country, the Jewish people simply cannot cut off more than half the remaining American Jews from communal support. The argument for this abandonment is often framed in economic terms: . . . the Jewish community simply does not have enough money to save all Jews. However, such an argument ignores the no-cost and low-cost ways to reach those on the margin. . . . One can disagree about the proper amount of support allocated to the

core and the periphery, but the principle of exclusion of the periphery that the authors advocate must be challenged.

Another problem is the authors' assertion that in making non-Jews and marginal Jews more "comfortable," Jews surrender their "deeply rooted Jewish beliefs." Here the authors fail to distinguish between those outreach activities in which Jews change their ways . . . and those, like Hebrew classes and beginners' services, in which Jews retain their distinctiveness but invite interested outsiders to join them. Thus, it is perfectly possible to retain the very religious identity that the authors (and I) want and simultaneously to welcome those on the margins. . . .

Finally, the authors leave out a central component in achieving Jewish continuity: encouraging the conversion to Judaism of the non-Jewish partner in an intermarriage. Conversion is a crucial goal because . . . it unites Jewish families, increases Jewish observance, . . . and more than triples the likelihood that the children of the marriage will be brought up as Jews. . . .

LAWRENCE J. EPSTEIN
Stony Brook, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

I will not take issue with the statistics cited in "How to Save American Jews," but I feel it necessary to respond to the authors' argument.

Let me begin with their assertion . . . that the core group is not being nurtured; if this means supported financially, the claim is palpably false. . . .

Consider the following:

First, the synagogues: I am not aware of any synagogue which does not require, and generally receive, substantial contributions over and above dues to maintain its program. . . .

Day schools: every day school I know receives a grant from a local federation. . . .

Institutions of higher learning: the Hebrew colleges (in Boston, Philadelphia, and Cleveland) also receive substantial community funding. . . . And the universities of this country are filled with endowed chairs nurtured by Jewish philanthropists who made them possible.

College programming: all campus Hillel societies raise money and most receive some kind of support from the federations. . . .

Rabbinical schools: the expenses of these institutions are heavily offset by funding from their respective lay organizations. . . .

Financial support is also given to camps, Israel programming, youth-group programming, . . . and other Jewish resources for the maximally affiliated. . . .

My second point is more subtle. I suppose it is true that reaching out to the intermarried and unaffiliated has resulted in a kind of *pareve*-style, neutral Judaism which runs counter to the passionate, committed, and deeply intellectual Judaism practiced by many in the core. . . . So what? . . . I have to live with humanistic Judaism, polydox Judaism, and Jews who think their dead *rebbe* is the messiah. How much worse can a Judaism be that appeals to an intermarried Jew?

Meanwhile, we have a community of interfaith couples, many of whom do not wish to isolate themselves completely from the Jewish community but do wish to find a place in it that is congenial to the lives they have chosen. . . . Now that they have chosen non-Jewish spouses and are raising children, many of them are groping for the means to express themselves Jewishly. In my experience, their Jewish identification is not marginally different from many in the core group. . . .

The decision made by many in the Jewish community, and not just by secular elements in the federations, . . . is that these people should be

reached. . . . And despite sociologists' claims, we do not know what the results of this kind of outreach will be in twenty years and more.

Thus, as they say, let a hundred flowers bloom. Keep funding synagogues, day schools, Hebrew colleges, Hillels, Israel programming, Jewish education, etc., . . . but at the same time, do not punish the intermarried . . . and the unaffiliated for their poor Jewish education. Let us do what we can to bring them in, and not worry too much about the version of Judaism we are teaching them. If what we have is substantive, it will take care of itself. If it is not, may I ask what all the

shouting is about anyway?

[RABBI] PHILIP COHEN
Brookline, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

"How to Save American Jews" raises important issues and suggests important remedies. In uncertain times there is always a strong pull toward hunkering down and protecting established institutions. But is that always the wisest strategy, especially in a situation where it is not overt persecution but the lure of acceptance that creates the very uncertainty of the times? It must always be stressed that the survival of American Jews and Judaism is not simply synonymous with the continued func-

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tioning of particular Jewish institutions in their present form. Institutions, as well as traditional beliefs and practices, are there to serve the people of the community. It is not contrary to communitarian values to recognize that people need to feel that their worth as individual moral beings is enhanced and strengthened by communal institutional symbols and practices; they should not be made to feel that they are of secondary value to these symbols and practices.

DANIEL LIECHTY
Havertown, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR:

"How to Save American Jews" . . . starts with the hypothesis that "actively engaged" Jews . . . are less likely to marry non-Jews than their less-engaged brethren. Fair enough. Endogamy is positively correlated with Jewish continuity (though the fact that Ashkenazi Jews, meaning most Jews in the West, have their very own genetic diseases probably means that it is time to make some waves in the gene pool).

But . . . this hypothesis is not necessary, because if Judaism really provides a "powerful lure" to the "rootless," as the authors say, then the non-Jewish partner in a marriage will be as likely to live a Jewish life as the other way around.

More importantly, it is not sufficient. First, of course, the Jewish couple has to have children, which means that the community as a whole must show more support for child-rearing—for men who want both careers and

families and for women who want both careers and families. . . . Since it is men who invariably sound the alarms about Jewish decline, perhaps men could take the first steps to reverse it. They could start by spending less time on law, accountancy, . . . academia, even medicine, and more time being attentive husbands and devoted fathers. . . .

Second, the Jewish child's ability to identify as a Jew in adulthood depends on far more than whether his parents attend services or eat pork. It depends on whether the synagogue-going Jew has set an example of living in accordance with Jewish moral and ethical precepts and diligently honored the spirit of the law, not just its letter. Has the family which uses two sets of dishes taught its children that the essence of Judaism is not what you believe, but how you behave? Or has it taught its children that they are "better Jews" than their nonobservant co-religionists, as most of the Orthodox families of my acquaintance have done? . . .

It is too bad that the authors got hung up on ritual, because their point that the "core" of Judaism constitutes its future could serve as the jumping-off point for a discussion of what 21st-century Judaism will be about. . . . The "reformed" liturgy, which the authors disparage, in many respects moves us closer to that core. What exactly is wrong with shedding the "chosenness-of-Israel" concept? Speaking as an "actively engaged" Jew, I applaud the move. The chosenness concept ex-

cludes . . . all those Jews who (like me) do not believe in God. What is more, it puts us on the same moral plane as every other group which insists that it is God's chosen handful. . . .

SALLY NEWMAN
Arlington, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer, Charles S. Liebman, and Steven M. Cohen are right on target in their assessment of the terribly misguided efforts by some mainstream Jewish task forces to ensure Jewish continuity. My own experiences and observations support their thesis that the only way to ensure Jewish continuity is to promote "actively engaged Judaism." I have seen an outreach program that works under a task-force's guidelines, and I have seen a program that promotes observant Judaism. Both programs fill empty seats in the synagogue; the former with curious non-Jews, the latter with curious Jews.

The authors manage to analyze the deficiencies of some outreach efforts without pointing fingers at any one denomination. I will do it for them. Reform Judaism is the only denomination in my view willing to water down Jewish content in order to make non-Jews and marginal Jews feel comfortable. I remember an argument I had with an outreach coordinator for Reform synagogues. I was a teacher at a Reform synagogue in Poughkeepsie at the time. I complained that almost half of my class of second-graders were products of intermarriage and I was forced to avoid

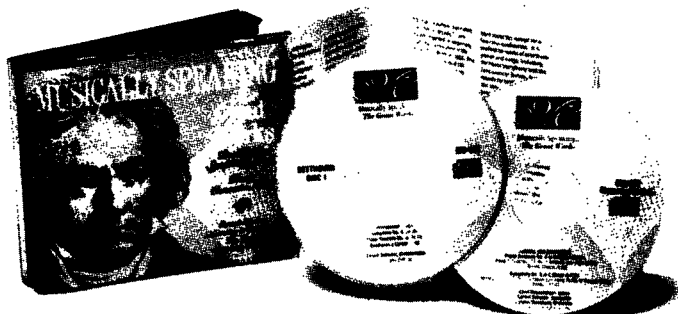
some issues in order not to make these children feel left out. For example, the class drew pictures of the Garden of Eden. One little girl drew a large crucifix at the entrance to the Garden. I could not correct her because her mother was Catholic and she was only drawing a symbol of her mother's religion. I asked the outreach coordinator how she could justify a child drawing crucifixes in a "Jewish" class in the name of outreach. . . . Her answer was at least honest. She said that synagogue membership was down, there would not be many Jews left to come to synagogue in the future because of intermarriage, but this "watering down" would attract many intermarried couples to the synagogue and fill the seats. . . .

On the opposite end of the outreach spectrum is the "beginners" service held at Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun, an Orthodox synagogue in New York City. This service attracts dozens of young, marginal Jews to Sabbath morning and High Holy Day services. One Rosh Hashanah, over 400 people came to the service. The concept is simple. The leader (sometimes a rabbi, sometimes not) conducts the Orthodox service at a slow pace, mostly in Hebrew. He explains every step of the way (often using humor) and encourages questions on any related subject. It is a great way for marginal Jews to learn about their heritage in a noncoercive, supportive environment. It is Judaism without apology and it serves two purposes: educating and attracting

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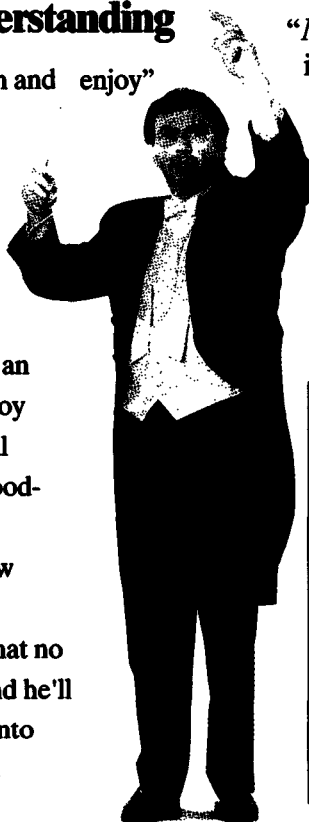
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marginal Jews, and reinvigorating core Jews. Outreach programs such as this are spreading throughout the country.

Combating intermarriage is a lifelong endeavor. The time to fight it is not the moment one's child brings home a non-Jewish fiancé. A parent must start from day one and bring up the child in a home and community that is filled with Judaism as a way of life, not just a hobby. Simply put: to fight intermarriage, teach Judaism.

GARY SKULNIK
Atlanta, Georgia

TO THE EDITOR:

The American Jewish community should be grateful to Jack Wertheimer, Charles S. Liebman, and Steven M. Cohen for pointing out the problems of programs for the intermarried that are equivocal about Judaism and Jewish values. Such problems illustrate the two competing paradigms of Jewish communal life. There are, first, secular Jewish agencies which follow a social work/therapy model that is often value-free; one example the authors cite is a course on bicultural exploration in interfaith marriage co-sponsored by Hillel and the Jewish Family Service.

The competing paradigm is that of the synagogue world, whether Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox. The synagogue as an institution is unequivocally and unapologetically value-laden; we want the creative survival of the Jewish people as a religious people. The more families practice Judaism, the greater the chances of reaching that

elusive target called Jewish continuity. If the synagogue can teach intermarried families how to function as Jewish families, then we will have achieved a partial victory. That is the goal of the Reform movement's Outreach Commission, which I co-chair.

There will be times when that agenda will find its way into the sanctuary. The authors report that at celebrations in some synagogues, non-Jewish family members read prayers that omit Jewish chooseness. Though I do not perform intermarriages, I have written a widely circulated prayer for non-Jewish parents to read at bar- and bat-mitzvah ceremonies as a supplement to the traditional Torah blessing which is offered by the Jewish partner. The purpose of this prayer is not to eliminate the idea of chooseness (which in any event would be inappropriate for a non-Jew to affirm publicly); neither is it to make non-Jews feel "comfortable." Rather, this prayer allows non-Jewish parents to proclaim their appreciation of the fact that the Torah has come into the world through the Jewish people, and that they are pleased to have a child who is now entering maturity. Such prayers address the feelings of family members at pivotal moments in their lives. They help interfaith families feel valued and cherished by the synagogue. Many of them will become part of that saving remnant of which the Prophets dreamed.

[RABBI] JEFFREY K. SALKIN
*Central Synagogue of
Nassau County
Rockville Center, New York*

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer, Charles S. Liebman, and Steven M. Cohen, in "How to Save American Jews," deserve great credit for restoring the Jewish-continuity debate to where it appropriately belongs—the realm of values, culture, and normative commitments to leading a Jewish life. There can, in short, be no Jewish continuity absent serious commitment to Judaism.

The authors correctly diagnose the reason why the Jewish community has thus far been unable to develop a meaningful agenda and strategy to secure the future quality of American Jewish life—the well-intentioned but misguided desire to target a broad and inclusive consensus that ultimately is so bland as to be essentially meaningless. Indeed, it is perhaps a point of no small irony that the ideology of consensus that has served American Jewry well in marshaling support for Israel and defending against anti-Semitism may very well be counterproductive in trying to inspire commitments to leading a meaningful and creative Jewish life.

Rather than aim for broad consensus, American Jewry would do well to recognize that some losses are, sad to say, inevitable, given the degree of Jewish acceptance in American society coupled with declining commitments to Judaism.

The solution must lie in serious Judaism. The most important battlefield in the fight for Jewish continuity, I believe, will be the Conservative and Reform

religious movements. Serious, well-educated, and literate Conservative and Reform Jews are most unlikely to assimilate. For that reason, Jewish communal resources ought to be increasingly directed toward strengthening those movements and their members. In turn, and for the same reason, the critical importance of pluralism in Jewish religious life must be underscored. Orthodox leaders would do well to recognize that the primary threats to Jewish identity emanate from religious indifference rather than from religious pluralism. Steps recently taken by the Reform movement to enhance Jewish literacy and to deny Jewish education to children being raised even partially as Christians merit the approbation of Orthodox Jewry.

American Jewry has succeeded in advancing its agenda of securing a home in America. The question for its future is whether it has the will to build a Jewishly authentic culture sufficiently compelling to articulate a language of norms, commitments, expectations, and the demands of its adherents, alongside its place in the broader American society—a duality that this unique country makes possible. Failure to articulate such a language connotes an end to Jewish distinctiveness—a future scenario perhaps best forecast by the popular science-fiction series, *Star Trek*.

STEVEN BAYME
*Director, Jewish Communal
Affairs Department
American Jewish Committee
New York City*

JACK WERTHEIMER, CHARLES S. LIEBMAN, and STEVEN M. COHEN write:

Contrary to the impression of Lawrence J. Epstein, the purpose of our article was not to call for the "exclusion of the periphery." Rather, we were motivated by two other concerns: how best to employ finite communal resources and how to ensure that Judaism is presented authentically. We believe that investing scarce funds and energies in Jews who are marginal to the community and/or to Judaism is unwise. On this point, reasonable people might disagree, but less debatable are the dangers inherent in many programs directed at marginal or peripheral Jews.

Specifically, to answer Rabbi Philip Cohen, we are concerned about three trends that characterize many efforts to "reach out" to the intermarried and other unengaged Jews: the tendency to deemphasize Jewish ethnicity and the special obligations Jews have toward one another; the blurring of boundaries between Jews and non-Jews, particularly within synagogues; and the compromising of Jewish norms and obligations in an effort to cater to virtually every conceivable individual need.

We do not dismiss all outreach programs. Rather, as Steven Bayme notes, we are concerned with a culture of consensus that compels federations to support a wide range of Jewish educational efforts,

some of which subvert Jewish communal values. These include programs that hold out little promise of enlarging the number of engaged Jews but undermine the principles of peoplehood, boundaries, and obligations, which, we had thought, were central to the ideology of the federation world. Of course, many federation-sponsored activities deserve both praise and additional support. Most notable in terms of achieving Jewish continuity are efforts to subsidize tuition for day schools and Jewish summer camps; promote study in Israel; organize adult studies in Jewish texts; and, in broad terms, to transform the culture of synagogues, Jewish community councils, schools, and other critical institutions of Jewish life.

The sentiments expressed by Daniel Liechty are in diametric opposition to our views. The Jewish community and its institutions should not simply function "to serve the people of the community . . . [and enhance] their worth as moral beings." Serving Jews is a legitimate function, but it is secondary to the major purpose of the Jewish community: to nurture Jewish identity and commitment. There is a system of beliefs and behaviors called Judaism that exists independently of the individual Jew. And it is the role of institutions to lead the Jewish community in accordance with these concepts.

Though we can certainly endorse Sally Newman's calls for Jewish men to spend "more time being attentive husbands and devoted fathers" and for Jews to live "in accordance with Jewish moral and ethical precepts," we cannot go along with her other positions. She is, therefore, correct in stating that we would "exclude" Jews like her, that is, Jews who, among other things, do not believe in God and reject the idea of the "chosenness of Israel." We consider such views antithetical to Judaism as understood by the vast majority of rabbis of all major movements.

But our "tough," non-inclusive-of-everything stance derives not only from our religious beliefs; it also relies on a recent line of social-science research documenting a counter-intuitive proposition: over time, those American religious groups which have been all-inclusive have declined in size while those which have set strict, though not rigid, standards have flourished. We therefore believe our strategy holds out more promise for Jewish continuity than one which invites Jews (and their non-Jewish spouses) to define Judaism in any way they see fit.

Gary Skulnik points a finger at Reform Judaism for watering down Jewish content. We too are alarmed by trends within the Reform movement. But since all three of us are affiliated with classical

Conservative Judaism, we are even more anguished by calls from some within our own camp for the kinds of accommodation that have proved disastrous to the Reform movement.

Since its inception, Conservative Judaism has championed Jewish solidarity and peoplehood, and has insisted on a Judaism of boundaries and norms. We support those within the Conservative movement who insist that non-Jewish spouses of Jews convert to Judaism and who treat non-Jews hospitably while simultaneously declining to give them any role in Jewish liturgical life.

We are pleased to note that the issues we raised also concern committed Reform leaders, as Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin's letter attests. And we encourage the efforts of those Reform leaders who have taken steps recently to distinguish between the roles of Jews and Gentiles in the synagogue.

In conclusion, we believe that the Jewish community should be far more judgmental about good outreach and bad outreach, good Jewish programming and bad Jewish programming, good models of Jewish life and bad models of Jewish life. Obviously this will have repercussions for Jewish unity. But if the price of unity is to legitimize the lowest common denominator of Jewish life, then the price is too high.



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The Wages of Oslo

David Bar-Illan

UNTIL 6:45 A.M. on February 25, 1996, supporters of the Oslo agreements between Israel and the PLO believed that history was on their side. Prime Minister Shimon Peres, the accords' true begetter, had declared in a *New York Times* interview, "The hunting season has ended in history." And on February 23 of this year, he was quoted more concretely as saying:

With the Palestinians everything is going well. All the commentators and experts who have been forecasting terrorism have been proved wrong. There have been no terrorist strikes. Arafat has dismantled the PLO's own terrorist network and is fighting seriously against terrorism.

Forty-eight hours later, the first of a series of six terrorist strikes hit Israel. Within eight days, suicide bombers had blown themselves up in two Jerusalem buses, at a soldiers' pick-up station in Ashkelon, and on a crosswalk in a Tel Aviv shopping center; an Islamic fanatic had plowed his car into a crowd waiting at a bus stop in Jerusalem; and five youths loaded with explosives had been apprehended while trying to penetrate an Israeli settlement in the Gaza district.

DAVID BAR-ILLAN, whose many articles in COMMENTARY on the Arab-Israeli conflict include "If This Be Peace . . ." (February 1995), "Next Year in (a Divided?) Jerusalem" (September 1994), and "Why a Palestinian State Is Still a Mortal Threat" (November 1993), is editor of the Jerusalem Post.

Except for the Gaza attack, every one of these operations resulted in deaths—62 all told. This brought the total of terror fatalities in the 31 months since the signing of the Oslo agreements to 213, the largest number in any such period since the establishment of the state. In per-capita terms, it was the equivalent of more than 10,000 American dead.

Nor did the Islamic terrorist assault against Israel begin on February 25. Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the two main terrorist groups, have been waging a relentless war against Israel for years. With tenacity, imagination, daring, and savagery, they have employed knives, guns, ambushes, kidnapping, car bombs, suicide bombers, and even hit-and-run drivers. The first attack by suicide bombers was in April 1993, almost a year before Baruch Goldstein massacred Muslim worshipers at the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, an event used as an excuse for Arab "revenge," and still longer before the pretext offered by the killing this past January of the Hamas arch-terrorist Yahya Ayyash, "The Engineer," in Gaza.

The difference between the more recent incidents and the six attempts in 1993 (one in the Jordan Valley, one outside Jerusalem, and four in the Gaza district) is that the earlier attacks caused "only" a few score injuries and one Israeli death. Had the terrorists been more proficient and their intended victims less fortunate, the fatalities would have been in the hundreds. Indeed,

in 1994 and 1995, having improved their technique, suicide bombers did take a heavy toll in Afula, Hadera, Tel Aviv, Beit Lid, Ramat Gan, and Jerusalem. Yet after each such attack, the Israeli government affirmed its faith in the peace process and even accelerated its "dialogue" with the PLO.

This year's concentrated wave of attacks seemed, at first, to mark not only a quantitative but a qualitative difference. On the part of the government of Israel, the immediate reaction to the slaughter was one of undisguised shock. There was talk of postponing national elections (the date for which had just been advanced by Labor in the hope of capitalizing on its huge lead in the polls following the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin), and of forming a national-unity government. Alternatively, leaders of both Labor and Likud suggested an emergency cabinet which would include members of the opposition. The Prime Minister himself, mincing no words, declared: "We are at war." For the first time, government officials began to wonder in public about the wisdom of continuing the process they had embarked upon in Oslo.

Only for a moment, however. Whatever others may have felt, it took Peres almost no time to recover. Belittling the suicide bombers as "bums," he reverted to his seemingly incontrovertible justifications of Oslo. While it is true, he said, that Islamic groups still practice terrorism, they represent a small minority. Thanks, indeed, to Oslo (his argument continued), a majority of the Palestinian people now disavow such measures, and the PLO, representing that majority, has decisively switched from violence to negotiations. True, the PLO may not have done enough to combat terrorism, but with a little pressure from Israel and the U.S., it will undoubtedly come to realize where its own interests lie, and act accordingly. In the meantime, continuing the negotiations, and bringing them to a successful conclusion, will eliminate the terrorist threat altogether. By contrast, if Israel were to *deviate* from the Oslo process, the Palestinians as a whole would revert to violence.

In short, as Peres put it in an interview with the Hebrew daily *Ma'ariv* after the bombings, "I continue to believe in Oslo. We are a quarter-hour before the peace, and that is the most dangerous quarter-hour."

Peres's view is hardly unique. It is shared, at least outwardly, by all Western governments and virtually all mainstream media, many of which

have painstakingly instructed us not only that the vast majority of Palestinians are for peace, but that even Hamas itself is divided between a few desperate militant factions and a gradually moderating "political wing." In fact, we are told, had it not been for Israel's insistence on liquidating Ayyash in Gaza, and, before him, the Islamic Jihad chieftain, Fahti Shikaki, in Malta, the chances are that Arafat would have succeeded in enticing the terror groups into the camp of the nonviolent, and the sudden flurry of bombings, which broke a seven-month calm, would never have occurred.

THIS IS a reasonable-sounding, hope-inspiring picture; but it has no foundation in fact. To begin with the "seven-month calm": two days before the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin by an Israeli extremist last November, two complex and coordinated suicide attacks against Israeli buses were mounted simultaneously in the Gaza district. Only sheer luck and the alertness of a military escort prevented loss of life. Throughout the seven months before February, moreover, there were ambushes, knifings, shootings, kidnappings, and attacks on Israeli vehicles with Molotov cocktails. Most ended relatively harmlessly, but six Israelis were killed in these incidents and a dozen or so seriously wounded.

If there were no *major* attacks in that period, it was because Hamas had promised Arafat it would keep a lower profile until his Palestinian Authority (PA), in accordance with the interim-stage provisions of the Oslo agreements, could take control of the major Arab population centers on the West Bank. Later, Hamas further agreed to maintain its lull until after the January elections for the Palestinian Council. Then came the holy period of Ramadan, a month in which ordinary Palestinians might react negatively to any actions which would spark punitive Israeli counter-measures. Three days after the Muslim festival of Id al-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan, the murder campaign was resumed.

Throughout this period of relative calm, Israel's government actively supported a dialogue between Hamas and the PLO, having bought Arafat's sales pitch that doing so would result in a moderation of the extremist elements. Israel not only halted anti-Hamas activities in areas still under its control, it enabled Hamas representatives to leave the country through border checkpoints in order to hold talks with the PLO in Sudan and Egypt. All this, according to numerous

Western and Israeli sources, meant that Hamas would soon renounce terrorism and join the election campaign for the Palestinian Council.

What happened instead has been well described by Yigal Carmon, former adviser on counter-terrorism to Prime Ministers Yitzhak Shamir and Yitzhak Rabin, in an article for the *Jerusalem Post*:

The PLO-Hamas dialogue culminated in an agreement formulated in a joint statement signed by both sides in Cairo on December 22. . . . As a result of these negotiations, and of the [PLO's] courting of Hamas, the organization has been strengthened. The PLO did not moderate it. On the contrary, the PLO accepted and . . . initiated the following principle: Hamas would halt operations only inside or emanating from the areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority—or would at least not claim any kind of responsibility for such operations. In all other areas, Hamas would be free to continue its activities.

It is not difficult to understand why the PLO would want Hamas to continue its operations, as long as these did not embarrass the Palestinian Authority or arouse Western suspicion that the PLO itself was condoning and abetting terrorism. Salim Zanoun, Arafat's chief negotiator with Hamas, and acting chairman of the Palestine National Committee (PNC)—the body of 400-plus members known as the Palestinian parliament—was aggressively candid about the purpose of the PLO-Hamas agreement. Speaking to Arab journalists in Cairo, he said:

This should be understood by all. We are not the defenders of the Israeli entity [*sic*]. We consider it sufficient to obligate Hamas not to embarrass the PA, which is responsible for security in the areas it has received, and from which it will not allow actions. . . . If Israel wants to spare itself Hamas attacks, it had better hurry and withdraw from the rest of the territories.

Informing the assembled journalists that he had telephoned Arafat to report on the agreement, Zanoun reported Arafat's response: "Allah bless you. This is good, this is nice."

Hamas, too, well understood the purpose of the agreement. Khaled Mash'al, its representative to the talks, said on the same occasion, "Hamas views its action as *support* for the Palestinian negotiators [with Israel] and the Palestinian Authority" (emphasis added).*

WHAT WESTERN interpreters have consistently obscured is that Hamas and Islamic Jihad do not, in fact, oppose the Oslo process. Although they object to any final settlement that would entail Arab recognition of Israel's legitimacy, they most emphatically favor Israeli withdrawal from "occupied territories," as dictated by the Oslo accords. Nor have they ever raised a hand against the PLO, the co-signatory of Oslo and an organization to which the Hamas charter refers as "father, brother, mentor, and close relative." Hamas may regard itself as Arafat's political competitor—it would like to rule an Islamic Palestine—but at this particular stage the two are following the traditional shoot-and-talk strategy of all dictatorships negotiating with democratic adversaries.

That strategy, rooted not only in doctrine but experience, has been all too effective. As Yossi Klein Halevi, a senior writer for the *Jerusalem Report* (and initially an enthusiastic supporter of the Oslo agreements), put it recently in a *New York Times* article:

At this stage of Palestinian nation-building, terrorism can be useful. The existence of a radical alternative strengthens Arafat's international legitimacy as a moderate leader and adds urgency to his demands for additional financing for the Palestinian Authority. Indeed, it was the growing power of Hamas that initially persuaded a skeptical Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to accept the PLO as a negotiating partner. Terrorism is also a psychological weapon, which helps ensure continued Israeli territorial concessions. Each new terrorist attack increases the number of Israelis demanding total separation from the Palestinians. The political consequence of that emotional response is greater Israeli acceptance of a Palestinian state. Thus, while Arafat may on occasion respond to international pressure and crack down on terrorism, he won't uproot the large-scale Hamas infrastructure that has grown in Gaza, at least for now.

It is, then, ludicrous to accuse Arafat of not

*In Israel, Carmon's contention was at first dismissed by Shimon Peres, who said he knew nothing of such an agreement, and by Justice Minister David Libai, who asserted that the Hamas-PLO talks had ended without agreement. But by the end of March the existence of a Hamas-PLO understanding along the lines described by Carmon was acknowledged by virtually all experts, including, significantly, Yehoshua Porat, a leading Middle East authority and a former Knesset candidate of the super-dovish Meretz party.

having done enough to curb terrorism, as both Peres and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher did in the aftermath of the latest bombings. No leader in the world better fits the description, "sponsor of terrorism," than he. Not only does he shelter terrorists; he lets them incite, recruit, organize, train, arm, raise funds, and launch operations from areas under his control. Even Peres finally admitted in mid-March that "the head of the snake is in Gaza," the area under Arafat's primary command.

It was the Hamas leadership in Arafat's Gaza, keeping on cordial terms with his Palestinian Authority, which decided on terrorist strikes and issued operational orders for the bus bombings. It was Arafat's Gaza where the Hamas military organization trained bombers and assembled explosives, where "The Engineer," the mastermind of suicide bombings which killed 50 Israelis, found shelter and PLO protection, and where his successor, Mohammed Dief, was living openly. In fact, Arafat's chief of preventive security was negotiating with Dief—a close friend—both before and after the first bus bombing in Jerusalem. Knowing of Dief's involvement in the bombing, he did nothing either to detain him or to prevent the next outrage.

Nor, unlike Hafez Assad of Syria and other international sponsors of terrorism, does Arafat bother to keep a safe distance from the killers in order to preserve "deniability." Arafat himself elevated Ayyash to sainthood, paying a condolence call on Hamas leaders after his death, lauding him as a martyr and hero, and arranging for the Palestinian police to participate in the funeral and fire a 21-gun salute in the terrorist's honor. It was with Arafat's knowledge and approval that commemorations for Ayyash were held throughout the West Bank and Gaza, including one in Kalkilya three days before the first Jerusalem attack in which a crude mock-up of an Israeli bus marked (after an earlier successful terrorist assault) "Dizengoff 5" in Hebrew was burned in the town square.

Arafat participates—usually through an amplified telephone—in Hamas rallies like the one held last year at the Abu Dis Islamic campus in Jerusalem. There the main speaker, Sheikh Jamil Hamami, intoned:

We have not forgotten for a single day Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa . . . and all of Palestine. The road is very long, but you must continue on it until victory or death for Allah. My wish is to die a martyr.

Hamami was later tried by an Israeli court; the PLO paid for his legal defense.

IN VIRTUALLY every one of his speeches to the Palestinian multitudes, Arafat demands the release from Israeli prison of Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, Hamas founder and spiritual leader, and he invariably urges *jihad* against Israel. Although he has assured Peres and the Western media that *jihad* means "nonviolent improvement" or even a "love letter," he always accompanies the call with exhortations to sacrifice, death, and martyrdom; alludes to the precedent whereby the Prophet Muhammad signed treaties with enemies when his own following was weak, only to scuttle them and emerge triumphant when he became stronger; lionizes and glorifies terrorists who have died in the struggle against Israel, including those who have attacked Israelis *after* the signing of the Oslo accords; and refers repeatedly to the PLO's 1974 "plan of stages" for Israel's destruction. After terrorist incidents in Israel, Arafat has invariably freed the Hamas operatives who had been just as routinely rounded up by the Palestinian police.

But—say Arafat's apologists—there is no denying that Fatah, his own organization in the PLO, has eschewed terrorism, and that at least two-thirds of the Palestinian population have decided to lay down their arms. This, too, is misleading. True, since the signing of the Oslo agreement Arafat's Fatah organization and his bodyguards in Force 17 have not (with a few exceptions) attacked Jews. But for a clearer indication of the PLO's disposition we have not only Arafat's own words quoted above, but the pronouncements of his closest lieutenants.

Thus, Nabil Shaath, the PA's Minister of Planning and a favorite Arafat negotiator, said in a recent Nablus symposium (telecast on local Palestinian television):

If the negotiations reach a dead end, we shall go back to the struggle and strife, as we did for 40 years. It is not beyond our capabilities. . . . As long as Israel goes forward [with the process], there are no problems, which is why we observe the agreements of peace and nonviolence. But if and when Israel will say, "That's it, we won't talk about Jerusalem, we won't return refugees, we won't dismantle settlements and we won't retreat from borders," then all the acts of violence will return. Except that this time we'll have 30,000 armed Palestinian soldiers who will operate

in areas in which we have unprecedented elements of freedom.

As if to complement these statements, another Arafat spokesman, Marwan Barghouti, told the (London) *Independent* that Palestinian security forces have been ordered to fire if Israeli soldiers ever try to enter territories under the PA's control. He added that the Palestinians are in possession of many more weapons than the agreement allows, and that their armed forces are much larger than advertised. Still another Fatah spokesman, according to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, "warned London's *Sharq al-Awsat* newspaper [in mid-March] . . . that violence and terrorism against Israel [would] be expected until Israel withdraws fully from the territories."

AN INTERESTING insight into Arafat's mind is afforded by his habit of charging that Israeli "extremists" were complicit in this year's bus bombings. "Only a superman would have been capable of executing such a complicated operation without Israeli help," Arafat told one visitor, and then proceeded to name the purported Israeli organization involved: the OAS, after the clandestine right-wing group in the French army which in the late 1950's opposed French withdrawal from Algeria. Nor was this the first time he had made such a charge. Following the Beit Lid bombing in January 1995, which killed 22 Israelis, and again after the bus bombing in Jerusalem of August 1995, in which four Israelis died, he said similar things, and at one time even identified Ehud Barak, then chief of the General Staff and now Israel's Foreign Minister, as a leader of the group.

Of course it is doubtful that Arafat really believes in the existence of an Israeli OAS, any more than he believes Israel's ten-agma coin contains a secret map of expansion; that the blue stripes on Israel's flag represent the Nile and Euphrates rivers, the promised borders of "Greater Israel" in the Bible; or for that matter that Jesus was a Palestinian Arab—all things he has repeatedly avowed. Rather, he must assume that such lies—no matter how outrageous—will stick if repeated often enough. He is not the first dictator in history to assume so, and to be proved right. At the very least, Arafat clearly hopes to implant in Western minds a suspicion that those responsible for the bombings were not members of an Islamic organization with which he himself has repeatedly professed close relations and solidarity.

By floating these lies, moreover, Arafat risks nothing. Diplomats and journalists who hear his earnest descriptions of conspiracy may relate the story to their colleagues with an air of amused disbelief, but no one has ever called him to task for retailing such libelous fantasies, nor has doing so diminished the respect in which world leaders seem to hold him, or their resolve to help him with grants and loans. Even Yitzhak Rabin, who once stalked out of the room when Arafat attempted to sell him a similar canard, returned to continue negotiating.

Indeed, no matter how damning any of the evidence against Arafat, before February 25 of this year neither the government of Israel nor the Clinton administration ever found serious fault with his performance. The March 1 State Department report on compliance with the Oslo accords—required by law before additional aid could be approved—simply ignores the fact that the PLO has consistently violated virtually every aspect of the agreements and in particular has refused to extradite terrorists. Even after the February-March bombings, Secretary of State Christopher waited less than 48 hours after the routine round-ups began to state that Arafat was "doing 100 percent." For their part, Israeli officials have gone so far as to declare that anyone opposing American help for the PLO is no friend of Israel.

Nor, finally, is it only Arafat's support for violence against Israel which both the Israeli government and the U.S. administration have chosen to overlook. Although virtually every official report from Gaza has paid glowing tribute to the supposedly "wonderful improvements" wrought by the PA, a rather different picture emerges from a harrowing story filed in the Hebrew daily *Ha'aretz* by Gideon Levy, a former assistant to Peres and an ardent advocate of a Palestinian state.

Levy was brought to a Gaza apartment last December to hear testimonies by victims of the new regime. The window shutters were tightly closed, and Levy's host and his host's mother kept nervously checking the street for unusual movement. Everyone spoke in whispers for fear the neighbors might hear. Although the tales varied in detail, they were uniform in essence:

For many hours they told stories of bribery, exploitation, extortion, incarceration without trial, drug dealings, car thefts, prostitution, and everything imaginable.

A father says he has no idea what his son is being accused of. "It's not only my son, it's

the whole nation," he says. "The security people said they were taking him for five minutes; seven months have passed since then. In my life I have seen the Turks, the British, the Egyptians, and the Israelis. But I have never experienced this kind of situation. . . ."

An embittered woman says, "I have come to you from under the earth. My husband does not know I am here. He was told that he and his whole family would be liquidated if he reveals anything. We are endangered people now. . . . That's the face of the PA and that's what's come of it. We were happy, thinking we were being liberated from the occupation. Now God should chop off our hands which threw stones at the Jews. We brought this disaster on ourselves. Now there is no law and no justice."

Such testimonies are almost identical to those heard by numerous Israeli and foreign journalists in southern Lebanon in the wake of the Israeli invasion of 1982. There, too, the PLO had established a ministate, known in Israel as Fatahland. It was a state which an earlier generation of credulous Arafat groupies had praised for its hospitals and schools, its network of beneficent social institutions. In reality, it proved to be as savage and as corrupt as any Arab dictatorship in the Middle East.

Before assuming power in Gaza, Arafat boasted to skeptics that the PLO would run it expertly. "We acquired our experience," he said, "in Lebanon." So they did.

WHEN, IN 1993, Israel's Labor government adopted a policy of unilateral withdrawal from the occupied territories, even its most ardent supporters understood that this "redeployment," as the move was euphemistically called, could only work if the successor Palestinian regime turned out to be friendly. This is where Peres's much-heralded vision in his book, *The New Middle East*, came in: a confederation of Israel, Jordan, and Palestine, on the pattern of the European Union or of Benelux. Without this elaborate rationale, it is doubtful that the Israeli negotiators at Oslo would have gambled so recklessly on the fate of their nation.

The premise of the Oslo agreement was in fact twofold: not only would the PLO be transformed into a trustworthy European-style ally, it would perform the task of subduing any Islamic and radical "rejectionists" who refused to abandon

the armed struggle against Israel. As both Rabin and Peres put it, "instead of our chasing the terrorists, the PLO will do it. And they will not be constrained by courts and human-rights organizations."

In the general intoxication, it did not seem to dawn on Israel's government that building a Benelux-style partnership with a regime uninhibited by courts and human-rights organizations was a contradiction in terms, an insult to history and common sense alike. Police states do not a Benelux partner make. Nor can an Arab regime like the PLO, sworn to Israel's destruction, suddenly turn into a proxy. It will not use capital force against other Arabs, with whose goals it is in full sympathy, to satisfy a beleaguered government of Israel.

It is, of course, possible to reach an arrangement with dictatorial powers. But such arrangements, usually branded "cold war" or "cold peace," do not constitute peace in the West European sense: their maintenance depends not on friendship and cooperation but on deterrence, and as long as the dictatorial power continues to pose a danger, the democratic power is best advised not to surrender strategic assets to it.

Such elementary truths have begun to make themselves felt in Israel, where, thanks to the savagery of the recent bombings, the dream of a friendly, safe Palestinian entity across the street from Tel Aviv and Jerusalem has somewhat dissipated. Instead, Israelis of all political hues have now turned to a different solution: "separation." It is a solution to which, not surprisingly, Peres has always been strenuously opposed, and not least when it was introduced by Rabin after the Beit Lid massacre. "We are making peace, not borders," Peres then protested. Late last year, when leaders of Israeli communities abutting the areas of the PA complained of dangers to life and property, Ori Orr, the newly appointed Deputy Defense Minister, lectured them, "A fence is a matter of psychology, and psychology is not security."

Yet now the press and many politicians in Israel are touting fences, and worse, as the solution to Israel's security problems. Following the Sharm el-Sheikh conference, an editorial writer for the Hebrew daily *Ma'ariv* who has enthusiastically supported the Oslo agreements demanded: "Don't give us fences; give us a wall, a wall of steel." Trying to reconcile such a "wall" with the idyllic peace envisioned by the architects of the Oslo agreements, government spokesmen them-

selves now say, in effect, "We must separate for a generation, until we learn to live together. The idyll will have to wait."

Any decision to separate, however, would, willy-nilly, mark a repudiation of the Oslo accords, and a giant step backward beyond that. Instead of marching forward to a utopian "New Middle East" of peace and plenty, the Israel that built a wall would revert to the ghetto-like existence of 1948-67, when all the country's population centers were within a few short miles of a threatening border. Nor would that be the end of things. Although many—perhaps most—Israelis would give anything to remove the Arab presence from their midst, "separation" is no less chimerical than was Peres's dream of a European Union in the Middle East.

IT IS an inalterable fact of life that Israel's population is a mixed one: more than 850,000 Arabs live within the Green Line, Israel's pre-1967 borders. To say that the vast majority are loyal to the Jewish state is as meaningless as saying that most Palestinians are not terrorists. It takes no more than a few hundred activists to wreak the kind of havoc Israel has experienced lately, and the sorry fact is that in one case, that of the Dizengoff Center in Tel Aviv, the bomber entered the city with the help of an Israeli Arab. Those arrested in the round-ups of Hamas activists have also included Israeli Arabs. What else can Israel realistically expect in the future, particularly after the establishment of an irredentist, revanchist Palestinian state within walking distance of Arab Israeli towns?

Even more problematic are the 150,000 Arabs of Jerusalem, most of whom do not carry Israeli passports. Hamas and Islamic Jihad operate at least ten institutions in the city, each of them an incubator of hatred for Israel. These range from Al-Quds University and the Scientific Medical Association to the "Holy Land Fund" and other purported charities. There is little doubt where the sympathies of most of Jerusalem's Arabs lie.

But there is also no way for Israel to "separate" from these Arabs, either in the country at large or in Jerusalem, unless the government means to forfeit half the capital city and split it down the middle with a border fence, and thus relinquish sovereignty over the Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall as well. No, in the immediate future there is only one recourse: to roll back the Oslo agreements, and restore to Israeli security services complete freedom of action in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza.

This would not necessarily mean returning the army to the streets of Arab towns and villages—although the spectacle of Israeli soldiers chasing rock-throwing Arab youths might now be more palatable to many Israelis than further sights of carnage like Dizengoff Center. But it would almost certainly involve a clash with the forces of the PA, and it would cause bloodshed. The military power the Palestinians already possess, though it does not threaten Israel strategically, is unprecedented in its ability to inflict casualties and damage. Never in their history have Palestinian Arabs had 30,000 to 50,000 men under arms, nor have they ever before been equipped with the kinds of weapons they have today. Moreover, in its eagerness to placate the PLO, Israel has lost much of its own former intelligence network in the territories, allowing the Palestinian police to arrest, torture, and kill with impunity those who have provided the Israelis with information.

Yet the terror infrastructure must be destroyed. It may be tempting to postpone the day of judgment, particularly if the Islamic terrorists suspend operations for a few months and thus again succeed in inspiring false confidence. But trying to uproot the cancer later—when the state of Palestine is an official fact, when ports and airfields will have been built, when it will be impossible to prevent the Palestinians from importing all the weapons they want, and soldiers to use them—can only issue in all-out war.

Such is the brutal, implacable pass to which Oslo has inexorably led.

—April 8, 1996

The Zionist Idea and Its Enemies

Yoram Hazony

FOR YEARS now, certain Jewish intellectuals have looked forward to the coming “cultural war” in Israel, wistfully envisioning the day when withdrawal from the West Bank would release the country from the business of war with the Arabs and finally permit them the more genial pastime of having it out with the Orthodox over the character of the state. And indeed, with the signing of the Oslo agreements with the PLO in 1993, Israel was suddenly inundated by cultural artifacts intended to flaunt a new openness: joint Jordanian-Israeli rock concerts; theatrical performances of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* with Palestinian Arabs playing the Montagues and Israeli Jews the Capulets; a vast “peace” party on the beach in the old Roman city of Caesarea to which crowds of young Israelis came in togas—insipid but benign warning shots over the bow of the old “Jewish” and “Zionist” culture.

But in the wake of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a rightist fanatic from the religious community, all the fantasizing about a fraternal and entertaining cultural war has quickly dissolved. Israel and the entire Jewish people have suddenly found themselves staring into the immediate future, beyond the pre-

sumed end of the war with the Arabs, and directly into the face of yet another, very real war. The cultural war for which the intellectuals had yearned, having spat out three bullets, laid low a national leader, and sent the country into unimagined convulsions of internecine recrimination and hatred, is suddenly no pastime. Suddenly, it is a war much like the wars with the Arabs—a war that can kill, a war worth avoiding. But too late. It is here.

In the immediate aftermath of the assassination, with threats and investigations being aimed almost at random, a handful of supporters of the Rabin government urged that the Jewish state pull itself back from the brink: that the tragedy be used as an occasion to bring the country together, rather than as an excuse for a fight to the finish against the political Right and the religious. But to no avail. With few exceptions, the Left intelligentsia, both in Israel and abroad, took the assassination as the ultimate proof of everything it had long believed on the subject of those tribalistic, law-breaking, anti-intellectual, violent theocrats—traditional Jews. It was obvious there would never be a better chance to say so, and the temptation to proceed with a savage attack proved irresistible.

What made the assassination so appealing as a vehicle was the ease with which Yigal Amir, the rightist-religious extremist who had been cooking his horrendous deed for over two years,

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could be dressed up as the “everyman” of the nationalist opposition, your typical religious Jew. Amir, it was said, was “a boy next door . . . from a stable, religious family”; “just your average religious right-wing hard-liner”; “the product of the best religious-Zionist schools in Israel.” He “came out of the mainstream religious Right,” and “carried the same banners, shouted the same slogans, believed the same doctrines” as most other Orthodox Jews in Israel. By dint of simple arithmetic, if a “boy next door” like Amir were capable of such craven, fratricidal bloodletting, then so was practically any traditionalist Jew.

The conclusions as to what measures must be taken were quick to follow. The prominent Israeli writer Amos Oz declared:

The dividing wall . . . passes between those [in Israel] who aspire to Iranian-style theocracy, and the state of Israel—between them, and all of us. I hope that from now on Israel will have a Left which is truly dovish, and an opposing Right which is truly hawkish. And what won't there be? Filth. It will disappear. Not of its own accord—we must make sure to use the law to get rid of it.

The Israeli commentator Ze'ev Chafets:

To survive, democratic Israel must knock the fundamentalist rabbis off their pedestals and lock up their violent disciples. This means cutting off public funds to schools and youth organizations that indoctrinate children in anti-democratic ideals. . . .

Henry Siegman, former executive director of the American Jewish Congress:

[T]he Orthodox community is the seedbed . . . of a political culture that is profoundly hostile to the traditional democratic and liberal values of American Jews and of the founders of the Jewish state.

The Israeli philosopher David Hartman:

Jewish texts . . . not mediated by people who have a profound respect for democratic values, will turn into a moral barbarism. . . . If that happens, Judaism will be a threat to the future of Israel.

Leon Wieseltier of the *New Republic*:

This is not a time for healing. This is a time for reckoning. . . . The ugly truth . . . is that there is a community of Jews, in Israel and America, who are beyond the reach of decency. I do not want to “come together” with this community. I want to curse it, to fight it.

Yes, but who *are* these “fundamentalist rabbis” who are “beyond the reach of decency,” who are “profoundly hostile to democratic values,” who “aspire to Iranian-style theocracy,” and who are a “threat to the future of Israel”? Reading dozens of such articles from the Israeli and American press yields almost no references to the actual rabbis, institutions, books, or schools of thought that constitute the enemy against whom decent folk should go out and wage war. This is one discussion, it seems, that requires no research stage: you can get a lot farther in the culture war by overlooking who believes what and just lashing out directly at “them,” an elastic term which invites the reader to hate as many traditionalist Jews as he can label “fundamentalist”—maybe all of them.

In determining that “Rabin's assassination . . . represents the next step in the debasement of Israeli political life by religious zealotry,” the American political philosopher Michael Walzer also declined to name names. But, sparing us the pretense of others, he at least described what it is he wants to see in the political life of the Jewish state—indeed, what a great many of Rabin's self-appointed avengers seem to want:

Life in Israel today makes one long for a naked public square: politics without God, without myth and fantasy, without eternal enemies, without sacred causes or holy ground.

They want an Israeli politics without traditional Judaism.

II

MANY OF the intellectual and political figures who in the wake of the assassination have advocated “separating” traditional Judaism from the Jewish state depict themselves as taking up the cudgels of Theodor Herzl, the late-19th-century founding visionary of modern Jewish nationalism. Herzl and his closest followers in the Zionist Organization (ZO), they emphasize, were not themselves religious, and the ideas Herzl advocated were, to say the least, not particularly rooted in Jewish tradition. They also recall Herzl's famous dictum against theocracy: just as soldiers belong in their barracks and not ruling the state, so, too, do rabbis belong in the synagogues and not in the government.

Yet Herzl was no preacher of secularism, and Jews could still benefit today from his ideas on the place of religion in the Jewish state. Herzl

was what we would now call a political conservative, for whom the possibility of resurrecting an independent Jewish polity depended primarily on Jewish national power. But it was precisely his unique understanding of what constituted real national power that led him to regard the strengthening of Jewish tradition as a proper and essential interest of the state.

IN HIS book *Der Judenstaat* ("The Jewish State"), published 100 years ago in February 1896, Herzl laid out his theory that the true core of national strength is the *idea* of the nation in the minds of the people. Far from basing himself on today's materialistic conception of "nation-building"—the security services, bureaucracies, technology transfers, and economic projects which supposedly indicate that a country is "developing"—Herzl believed that nations are built from the mental achievements of peoples.

He argued, for example, that the national power of the Jewish state abroad had to be based not primarily on military might, but on an aggressive diplomatic stance that would persuade foreign governments the Jewish state was important to their own interests. Similarly, national power on the home front was primarily a matter not of acquiring physical assets such as farms and factories—as his opponents, the forebears of Labor Zionism, maintained—but of acquiring assets of mind which would deepen the people's "national consciousness": their interest in the nation's existence and their desire to take part in its upbuilding.

Herzl named three types of such assets of mind, without which he believed it would be impossible to win the Jews to the cause of the Jewish state on a permanent basis. The first were entrepreneurial; these would enable the Jews, for the first time in millennia, to apply their creative talents in freedom for their own personal betterment. The second were cultural, empowering Jews in the new state to partake of the "best" of mankind's achievements.

Herzl's third asset of the mind was the Jewish religion. This he considered to have been indispensable in nurturing the national idea in the past ("All through the night of their history," he wrote, "the Jews have not ceased to dream this royal dream: 'Next year in Jerusalem'"), and he believed it would continue to be essential in the future ("[W]e recognize our historic identity only by the faith of our fathers"). For this reason, Herzl insisted that the national awakening of the

Jews and their ingathering into the land of Israel should be led by rabbis, and that the synagogues in the newly built Jewish state should "be visible from afar, since the old faith is the only thing that has kept us together."

But Herzl considered the most important expression of religion in the Jewish state to be the establishment of "centers of faith"—not synagogues, but national holy places which could capture the imagination of the people, focusing them on their Jewish past and their common destiny. Along with entrepreneurship and culture, these religious centers would comprise the essential national assets of mind needed to produce a magnetic Jewish nationalism, capable of attracting the Jews of the world to the Jewish state: "For all these . . . taken together constitute a long-sought entity, one for which our people has never ceased to yearn . . . —a free homeland."

Remarkably, Herzl's theory of national power was based almost entirely on the power of ideas, and on the creativity of the Jewish mind in diplomacy, business, culture, and religion. No amount of military power could secure the state without these; and if these were not secured, the Jewish state would end up being of only "temporary" interest to the Jews, and would not endure.

Herzl died in 1904, a mere eight years after the publication of *Der Judenstaat*, and the Zionist Organization he had founded to implement his idea rapidly lost touch with it. Increasingly dominated by Herzl's opponents, the ZO became obsessed by the "practical" work of fundraising to subsidize farms and factories in Palestine, in effect substituting the materialistic aims of Russian socialism, and of the "Labor" Zionism which was its ideological stepchild, for the national goals Herzl had prescribed.

III

LABOR ZIONISM, a peculiar synthesis of socialism and Jewish nationalism, originated in Russia at the time when Marxist dialectical materialism was at the peak of its influence, and it is from there that the movement inherited its own messianic materialism: the idea that it is physical things, such as the body, the land, and the means of production, which hold the keys to human redemption. In the words of David Ben-Gurion, its leading figure, Labor Zionism meant bringing "masses of feeble, unproductive, parasitic Jews to fruitful labor. . . . We intend to transform the entire nation, without exception, . . .

into workers in Palestine. This is the essence of our movement. . . ." In line with this intention, Labor Zionism sought to create a "new Jew"—the coarse, powerful, anti-intellectual sabra of whom Yitzhak Rabin would become the epitome—and it was such Jews whom Labor Zionism held to have been redeemed.

This doctrine of materialist salvation was no more plausible in its Labor Zionist version than in its Russian one. Nevertheless, both "theologies," the one in Palestine and the other in Soviet Russia, succeeded in plodding on for decades under the constant threat of imminent war and the constant promise of imminent triumph. When, finally, the tension eased somewhat, each independently proved incapable of transmission to the next generation—and collapsed. In Russia, it was only a matter of decades before the totalitarian Soviet state itself followed suit. In Israel, the consequences of the end of Labor Zionism are still unfolding, but the direction is the same.

It is of course no simple matter criticizing David Ben-Gurion and the Labor Zionists who had come to dominate life in Jewish Palestine by the 1930's. There is no question that without their intransigent and heroic administration of the Jewish settlements—in the face of Arab pogroms, British repudiation of the idea of the Jewish state, and the spectacular rise of anti-Semitic regimes in Eastern Europe and Germany—Israel would likely never have been born. Yet it is also a fact, with which one must today come to terms, that one can read Ben-Gurion's writings and speeches by the hundreds of pages without finding any indication that he recognized the long-term importance of building up the national idea among the Jews.

True, Ben-Gurion did frequently invoke expressions like "spirit," "culture," the "visions of the prophets." But a glance at the context invariably reveals that, to him, such phrases were for the most part rhetorical levers for the accumulation of ever more physical power. For example, in a 50-page essay written when he was Prime Minister in 1951 and summarizing the aims of the fledgling state—principally, the building of new farming settlements, a greater armed force, and an effective bureaucracy—he offered the following in a minuscule section devoted to the importance of the Bible and Hebrew cultural revival:

[T]he final years of resurgence have braced and reinforced Jewish power and built up the vigor of Israel. Plows and tractors, mat-tocks and bulldozers, machines and forges, rif-

les and machine-guns, aircraft and ships, farms and factories, transport and laboratories, stables and granaries, installations and shelters, barbed wire and trenches, roads and plantations—for our survival, we must assure the proliferation and perfection of these without remission or surcease. Therefore must the spirit abide within us, in our heart and soul, wonderful, invisible.

In the cultural-historical debate within contemporary Israel, there are those who argue that the Jews of Palestine had no choice but to adopt the materialism of the Labor Zionists, given the circumstances of a land lacking in basic infrastructure and "absorptive capacity." Others believe the opposite—that the ZO's almost exclusive devotion to subsidizing Labor kibbutzim and socialized industry at the expense of all other sectors precluded the possibility of massive Jewish immigration, delaying the birth of the state by a decade and helping to doom the very European Jews whom settlement in Israel was supposed to save. But in either case, it is difficult to deny that the Jewish state which came into being in 1948 reflected Labor's priorities and not Herzl's—and to a large extent still does.

IV

LOOKING BACK, we can see that even before the founding of the state, there were two foci of resistance to Labor Zionist materialism. The first was the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which became a hothouse of humanist-universalist opposition to Ben-Gurion's brand of Jewish nationalism; leading figures at the university wrote and taught that the state could not organize itself around this ideology without eventually tending toward messianism and fascism. The second was the Orthodox yeshiva world, within which a new tradition-based Jewish nationalism gradually began to take shape as an alternative Zionist ideology.

By the time Ben-Gurion was finally driven from power in 1963, after three decades of unbroken personal domination of the country, the substantially more developed political visions emanating from these two sources had already begun to displace the terminally immature idea of Labor nationalism as the conceptual framework on which to construct a rationale for life in Israel. In particular, Ben-Gurion's last years in power were marked by increasingly acrimonious public broadsides from "the professors," who

considered his Labor Zionist ideas "dictatorial" and "totalitarian," and whose attacks did much to discredit him and hasten his fall. And when, after retirement, he called for a new wave of pioneers to join him in settling the wastes of the Negev, he found that he had failed to raise up a next generation willing to make the sacrifice with him; the Negev remains mostly barren to this day.

The machinery of the Labor party, preoccupied as always with guns and factories, seemed hardly to notice the gaping cultural void created by Ben-Gurion's departure. But among the professors and their disciples, the political demise of "the old man" was welcomed as the first opportunity to create a more "normal" Israel, one which would apply itself less to archaic and dangerously messianic missions, and more to obtaining peace abroad and enabling personal freedom and self-fulfillment at home—what we would today call a "post-Zionist" Israel.

Far from being a sign of advancing materialism, as is still often claimed by Zionist die-hards, the turn toward post-Zionist values in Israel after Ben-Gurion represented precisely the opposite: the search for something higher on the part of many intelligent Jews for whom life in Labor Israel's rather mediocre physical reality meant suffocation. Their feeling of alienation from the society constructed by classical Labor Zionism was captured by the novelist Amos Oz, recounting the experience of life on a kibbutz:

They had contempt for everything I was. Contempt for emotions other than patriotism. Contempt for literature other than [the nationalist poet Natan] Alterman. Contempt for values other than courage and stout-heartedness. Contempt for law other than the law of "strength makes the man."

AMONG TODAY'S post-Zionists, there are competing conceptions as to what must be done to satisfy the longings of many Israelis for freedom, creativity, urbanity, internationalism, and a touch of universalism—all things that Labor Zionism, in its narrow-mindedness and provincialism, had never been able to provide. Some believe that the "New Israel" can be constructed through the elimination of both Judaism and Jewish nationalism as motive interests of the state, since these are said to lead to racism and the corruption of democracy. Others would keep Judaism, but strip it of anything national or particularistic, since such associations are said to corrupt its essential humanism. Still others argue

that the era of the national state is in any case coming to an end, and that Israel will do untold economic or cultural or political harm to its citizens if it tries to resist the worldwide trend toward falling borders and the abandonment of old, battle-scarred identities.

But regardless of the approach, the bottom line is always the same: in the academic world and in the media, among writers and artists, and in the legal establishment—in short, in every corner where an "enlightened" Jew might seek to come to meaningful terms with his country and his world—the idea of the Jewish national state is understood to be destructive, undesirable, and certainly passé.

Among the concrete ramifications has been a wholesale assault on every aspect of government policy that might remind one that Israel was to have been the Jewish state. There is, for instance, the demand by the novelist A.B. Yehoshua and others that the Law of Return (which grants to Diaspora Jews the automatic right of Israeli citizenship) be revised so that citizenship will "no longer be granted automatically," but rather "in a fashion similar to the way [it] is granted in other properly functioning countries." There is the increasingly common suggestion, voiced, among others, by Amos Mar-Haim, Labor's candidate-apparent for the mayoralty of Jerusalem, that Israel's capital city be redivided, with large sections handed over to the PLO. And there is the vision of Prime Minister Shimon Peres in his book, *The New Middle East*, of a Jewish-Arab entity encompassing the entire region in which Jewish and Arab national identities will disappear and "our self-awareness and personal identity will be based on this new reality."

Post-Zionist initiatives already wending their way through the legislative process include the decision by Amnon Rubenstein, currently the Minister of Education, to revamp the directives governing Israel's school system, removing the "archaic" interest in "Jewish values and culture," "love of homeland," and "loyalty to the Jewish people" and replacing it with a pluralistic concern for "the language, culture, and unique heritage of the various population groups in the country." Other initiatives have already become enshrined in policy, like the Defense Ministry's new code of ethics for the army, *The Spirit of the IDF* ("the moral and normative identity card of the Israel Defense Forces"), which does not refer even once to the Jewish people, the Jewish tradition, or the land of Israel.

Precisely as Herzl had feared, the absence among many Jews of a compelling national idea has rendered "temporary" their interest in the Jewish national state. Indeed, many in Israel have simply tired of it, and have gone on to pursue other dreams.

V

THE TROUBLE is—many others have not. Four years after Ben-Gurion's fall from power, the Six-Day War brought the Jewish state back to most of the places to which the biblical prophets had foretold the Jews would one day return. Herzl's understanding of the role of religious centers in building the loyalty of a nation could have received no greater vindication than in the consequent upsurge of the national idea among religiously observant Jews, a revival driven by the theories emanating from the Mercaz Harav Kook yeshiva in Jerusalem.

Founded in 1924 by Abraham Isaac Kook, the first chief rabbi of pre-state Palestine, "Mercaz" had offered a vision of the return to the land of Israel as the beginning of divine redemption, including religious sanction for the toil of Labor's nonreligious farmers, whose physical exertions were seen as instrumental in helping to bring about an ultimate spiritual restoration in Zion. But throughout the ensuing decades, so long as Israel remained, in the eyes of the pious, merely another Levantine republic, such "Kooknik" notions remained subdued. Only in 1967, with the return to Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Hebron, did the yeshiva world begin to feel that Israel could become something much more significant than the disappointing reality it had been. And then a new generation of Jewish nationalism was abruptly born.

The change was most rapid and most dramatic in the old "religious-Zionist" community, which until 1967 had been little more than an ideological appendage of Labor Zionism. Politically, the religious Zionists, organized in the National Religious party, had supported the leadership of Labor on virtually all issues of foreign and economic policy, reserving their power for securing minimum government conformity to Jewish ritual and for procuring state funds for their institutions—an ultra-petty agenda seemingly designed to earn the contempt of all but their most immediate constituency.

The evaporation of Labor Zionism, however, led to a dramatic turning of the tables. Within a

handful of years, it became evident that the only Zionist idea with any kick left in it was the yeshiva nationalism of Mercaz, and the religious-nationalist leadership, suffused with a new sense of responsibility, ran forward to pick up where Ben-Gurion had left off. Thus it came about that the two-and-a-half decades between 1967 and 1992—the same years which the new post-Zionist intellectual elite hoped would produce the "normalization" of the country—turned instead into a protracted struggle over the reemergence of a new national idea.

From the point of view of the post-Zionists, Mercaz's new nationalism was eerily reminiscent of Ben-Gurionism, although the worse for its religious coloration: those archaic and dangerous Zionist missions, so recently suppressed, had been given a whole new lease on life. And the post-Zionists were right. For despite an ambitious world view rooted in a substantial canon of new and important Zionist philosophical teachings, the practical imperatives championed by Mercaz did turn out to be almost absurdly similar to those of the original Labor Zionism. The "worker" was replaced by the observant Jew in the van of the struggle for redemption, but the materialist concerns of Labor—Jewish settlement of the land, Jewish immigration, military service, and even farming—remained the essential aims being broadcast by the new religious nationalism through a burgeoning network of institutions.

For much of the 1970's, when the Mercaz-inspired settlement movement was at its high point of activism on the West Bank and the Golan Heights, in Gaza and East Jerusalem, the ideological initiative in Israeli society did indeed seem to have gone over to the new nationalism. The old image of the coarse, powerful, anti-intellectual kibbutznik was replaced at the cutting edge of Israeli society by that of the coarse, powerful, anti-intellectual yeshiva student. The IDF's elite units, once the exclusive preserve of the children of the collective farms, began finding themselves inundated by religious cadets whose motivation and willingness to sacrifice were the highest in the country—at a time when falling motivation had been widely feared as the gravest threat to the future of the Israeli military. Religious Zionism began to be understood not only as the last Zionism, but as the last ideological force capable of motivating young Jews to sweat and die to build a nation which, in spite of everything, was still in need of such sacrifice.

THE RENEWED commitment to the Jewish state in religious circles had what was perhaps its greatest impact on the mainstream political Right. The Likud party, the political heir to the nonsocialist Zionist movements of the Center and Right, had never really been a player in the high-stakes game to establish a political vision of the Jewish state. Having failed to found a college, a major newspaper, or any other serious organ for the development of political ideas, the "secular" Right became culturally inert in the years after the founding of the state.

When Menachem Begin finally came to power in 1977, it was principally through an alliance with the Mercaz-inspired settlement movement that Likud leaders were able to catch some of the adrenaline of the Ben-Gurionist revival taking place in the religious community, and feel they stood at the helm of something grand. Some prominent figures in Likud even fell into the habit of speaking of the "national camp" (Likud plus its religious allies) as "the new Mapai"—using the old Hebrew name for David Ben-Gurion's politically and ideologically dominant Labor party.

With the benefit of hindsight, however, we now know that this triumphalism was, if not entirely misplaced, then at least hopelessly premature. The fact is that in the struggle for the heart of the Jewish nation, Mercaz and its allies lost—and badly. The cultural wasteland surrounding Likud remained pristine during its fifteen years in power. And the settlers, despite winning widespread respect and admiration for their idealism, managed to leave the overwhelming majority of Israelis untouched by the spirit of the revival they represented. Even as Mercaz and the settlers sought to rally the country back to its Jewish mission by reminding it of what Labor Zionism had stood for, the majority was being drawn farther away from Labor Zionist values with each passing year.

The rejection of Mercaz and its Ben-Gurionist appeal by a generation well along in its post-Zionism can be found, for example, in the assessment of the settlers offered by the well-known Israeli media commentator, Amnon Dankner:

They hoped that if they were to strike the pose of the mythological sabra, with his shirt hanging out of his pants, with a shock of unruly hair and a firearm, they would become accepted and loved. But their hopes have been frustrated, for they command no real presence in the cultural mainstream and in

the cultural elite. What we see today in their doings is kitsch. . . .

The composer Arik Shapira, winner of the Israel Prize, the state's most prestigious award, demonstrated a similar contempt for the efforts to revitalize Jewish nationalism in his notorious work, "On Your Ruins, Ofra." Explicating the meaning of this musical composition, he said it looked forward to "the destruction of the [West Bank] settlement of Ofra, with the transfer of all the settlers." These settlers, added Shapira, "took Zionist values, whose historical role had come to an end, and they decided to resuscitate a corpse. . . . This is a sector [of Israeli society] which I hold in contempt. . . . I abhor them."

But the clearest repudiation of Mercaz's message was the 1993 Oslo agreements with Yasir Arafat, which granted control over the geographic core of ancient Israel to the PLO—and thus explicitly abjured the return to these areas promised by the biblical prophets. And yet by the time this deal was cut, nearly two-thirds of the Israeli public was willing (at least immediately after the signing) to accept it.

STILL, IT would be a serious misreading of events to blame the defeat of Mercaz on the overt popularity of post-Zionism with the average Israeli. Outside of intellectual circles, the great majority are even today quite willing to consider themselves Jews and Zionists; they see themselves as "traditional," and wish their children knew more about Judaism. There is therefore no question that during the heyday of the Likud-Mercaz alliance, the opportunity existed to construct a hefty consensus around a renewed and attractive Jewish nationalism.

But on the side of the nationalists, no "idea work" was done to match what was taking place on the post-Zionist side. For all the effort that had been poured by the yeshivas into constructing a new Zionist philosophy, almost none turned out to be meaningful to a society seeking a vision of modern Israel. Instead of offering sorely needed direction—what to do with the state's regimented economy, the chaos of its political constitution, its ongoing diplomatic weakness, or even its increasingly malignant cultural institutions—the Zionists concentrated on settlements, land, armies. Not surprisingly, this message once again failed to inspire broad and profound belief in Jewish national life, just as it had failed to do when Ben-Gurion was selling it the first time around.

Mercatz not only failed in too faithfully adopting the content of Ben-Gurion's materialist message; it clung too closely to his political method as well. Like the Labor Zionists, the settlers relied almost exclusively on an incremental politics whose standard of achievement was an additional house built, an additional Jew moved out to the settlements. Their political tools were consequently the most primitive conceivable: pulling strings with the government for budgets to build homes in the territories, speechmaking in synagogues.

The sectors of the population reached by these methods were always those least capable of influencing the broader life of the nation. The core of Mercaz's support, even after decades of strenuous outreach, included few academics, journalists, authors, artists, jurists, economists, political thinkers—that is, shapers of the public mind. For every “fact on the ground” that the religious nationalists were able to generate, their opponents amassed another novel, another history text, another television production: cultural assets whose political influence was exponential, and which eventually outstripped the influence of the settlers by orders of magnitude.

Only now, after Oslo; after calls by members of the government to delete the Jewish references in the national anthem, *Hatikvah*, so as not to offend Arab sensibilities; after the establishment of an active PLO security apparatus functioning openly in the streets of Jerusalem; after Shimon Peres's calls for Israel to join the Arab League—only now have some in the “national camp” begun to recognize that for a new Jewish nationalism to take root, they would have to compete in all the realms of the mind in which Labor Zionism failed—and in which the post-Zionists have invested everything.

VI

FOR MOST Jews in Israel, the idea that their country is powerful is axiomatic, unchallengeable. American Jews, too, despite their greater sensitivity to Israel's vulnerability, are often willing to submit to the materialist illusion that factories and fighter planes are enough to make a nation strong. Leon Wieseltier voices the wishful thinking of many when he writes:

The creation of Israel, the security of Israel, the peace of Israel: who any longer thinks that these are experiments and dreams, efforts that may or may not fail, ideas and insti-

tutions still struggling to be born. . . ? This is a country . . . [that] is fundamentally indestructible.

But Israel is not fundamentally indestructible. No nation is. The Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia—these, too, looked fundamentally indestructible at one time, if one were to judge by the material and military assets accumulated in their names. What rendered their survival a question was not the want of factories and fighter planes, but the lack of a strong national idea among the people. Nor do dictatorships exhaust the category of the destructible; consider the all too possible dissolution of even so strong a bastion of democracy as Canada.

When one ponders what Herzl believed it would take to establish a national idea among the Jews, it becomes apparent that, beyond its material assets, Israel is not powerful at all. In diplomacy, its momentarily high approval rating notwithstanding, Israel's chronic “lousy PR” has been one of the great constants of its history, having again and again failed to blunt the international revulsion that has attended its most basic efforts to live in safety. As an entrepreneurial center, the Jewish state continues to be paralyzed by a cliquish and monopolistic economy, all but impenetrable by Western Jews who might wish to immigrate; it rates lower than Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh in international studies of economic freedom, and its level of economic competitiveness scores lower even than Chile, Ireland, and Malaysia. As a cultural center, too, Israel's achievements have, with few exceptions, been marginal.

And the absence of the magnetic power with which Herzl hoped to attract world Jewry is palpable. Those whose personal goals are primarily entrepreneurial or cultural do not, to this day, make their way to the Jewish state to make it their homeland. On the contrary, such Jews leave Israel for Los Angeles or New York or London—as they are urged to do by a popular song played frequently on government radio: “In London there are more movies/In London there's good music/In London there's excellent television/In London people are more polite. . . /If you have to die like a dog/At least the television should be television.”

Of all the national powers that Herzl believed the Jewish state must cultivate, the only one that ever became the subject of systematic emphasis was the idea of Israel as a homeland of motivat-

ing religious sites. But these religious centers are now being transferred out of Israel's control, and no one knows when, if ever, they will be recovered. Thus the last asset of mind required by Herzl to root his Jewish national idea among the people—and hence to give the Jewish state the power necessary for its flourishing and long-term survival—appears ready to go the way of the others.

As a compelling idea in the minds of its people, then, the Jewish state is emaciated and growing fainter with each passing year. Among Jews in Israel and abroad, there have been many for whom this weakness has signaled the end of the Zionist enterprise, and no small number have simply wandered away, resenting and even hating Jewish nationalism in their disillusionment. Many others have watched the process of dissolution in helpless anguish, not knowing what they, or anyone, can do. There have also been a few, like Yigal Amir, who have responded with rage, not caring whether the road they have chosen leads to national health or to national destruction, so long as it leads somewhere.

And finally, there have been those who have fixed upon the religious and their allies as the source of Israel's cultural disintegration; who accuse them of having created the atmosphere that has led to acts like the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin; who insist that (to borrow from David Hartman) Judaism has become "a threat to Israel"; and who conclude that the proper course is an all-fronts cultural vendetta to finish off the religious influence in Israeli public life.

ARE THE religious guilty? And if so, of what? To begin with, their guilt as a movement certainly does not lie, as has been charged, in having incited the murderer to murder. Moral and social outsiders, whose hatred of "the system" is expressed through affiliation with fanatical splinter groups like those Yigal Amir called home, have no respect for the opinions of established leadership, and need no encouragement from it to lay their plans.

Nor does the guilt of the religious nationalists lie in having encouraged desperate feelings among so many Jews. That a Jew feels pain upon recognizing Israel's weakness and decay is a sign of a still-living national consciousness, the essential achievement of Zionism. And if this consciousness exists more strongly among the religious, the shame rests with other movements or streams in whom Herzl and Ben-Gurion, for all

their efforts, failed to inspire an enduring commitment to the rebuilding of the Jewish nation in the homeland of its fathers.

No, the true guilt of the religious lies elsewhere, in the decades squandered on petty politics while the idea of the Jewish nation was left to stagnate and grow faint. "No man is strong or wealthy enough to move a nation," Herzl wrote. "Only an idea can do that." What, today, is that motivating idea? Of what value is the Jewish nation? What is its mission? What should be the nature of its institutions? What has it to contribute to mankind? What is to be gained by joining in its struggle? Why should one sacrifice on its behalf? Why should the Jewish state exist at all? Among today's nationalists, one searches in vain for an idea with which to respond to the challenges facing the Jewish state.

And herein lies the true guilt of the religious. If they and their cultural allies had had a substantial arsenal of ideas and a genuine alternative for which (and with which) to fight, the desiccated theology of Labor Zionism might long ago have given way to a more profound Jewish national understanding; post-Zionism might have remained the preserve of an irrelevant clique of academics; and the assassin might have lived out his life in some corner without our ever having been cursed to know his name. Most important, the Jewish state might today have been as Herzl envisioned it: a magnet and a lantern for Jews, and for Gentiles as well.

All that having been said, it also remains the case that with the bulwark of Labor Zionism gone, religious Jews today possess the sole remaining form of Jewish nationalism with any of the basic building blocks of a living idea: a coherent ideological position, a functioning educational system, a demonstrated ability to inspire and motivate the young, a discernible political plan of action. If there is ever to be a broader-based revival of the Jewish national idea in the hearts and minds of the Jewish public in general, it will only be accomplished with the assistance of the cultural capital which has been accumulated by the religious over long decades.

As one religious-nationalist leader confessed recently, "We have settled in the heart of the land, but we have not even tried to settle in the hearts of the people." That is precisely the point—the same point that Herzl tried to teach in the brief period he led the Zionist movement. Whether the Jewish national camp is yet capable of grasping it, and of acting on it, remains to be seen.

Life With Mark

Arch Puddington

BACK IN the summer of 1980 my wife, Margaret, our then-eighteen-month-old son, Nicholas, and I spent several weeks in a dreary resort in the lower Catskills. It was there that we met the Ducks.

The Ducks were a group of mildly retarded young adults who were enjoying a holiday at the same hotel. I believe it was Margaret who bestowed the designation on them, because of the fierce attachment one of their number seemed to have developed for a Donald Duck flotation device kept in the swimming pool for the use of children. His name was Herb, and in contrast to the other Ducks, who were friendly and outgoing, Herb was withdrawn and more than a little strange. He would spend hours stroking the resort owner's cat, and once planted himself in the middle of a busy intersection in a nearby village where he proceeded to direct traffic until the local police intervened. Herb's favorite occupation, however, was paddling up and down the pool supported by the duck float, which he regarded with the same kind of nervous jealousy a young child reserves for a treasured toy. Losing possession of the float would send him into a state of visible agitation, and while he never contested any child for the object, the act of restraining himself took all the limited patience he could

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summon. Calm returned only when the precious thing was restored.

The Ducks were topic number one among the guests and—especially—the staff, who regaled us with stories of their various adventures. There were many such tales, for the Ducks, despite their condition, went everywhere, took part in every activity, and appeared blessedly unaware of what the world thought of their presence. In the condescending gossip and quiet mockery, Margaret and I took part without a second thought.

We have had many opportunities to reflect on our encounter with the Ducks in subsequent years. Margaret was seven-months pregnant during our stay in the Catskills, and we soon learned that the child she was carrying was to be far more handicapped than the marginally retarded group who had provided us with so much diversion.

WE WORRIED about Mark almost from the beginning. He slept constantly, cried and fretted much less than would be expected of a normal child, and failed to sit upright or crawl at the appropriate months. At about one year, Mark suffered a major seizure, and was then diagnosed as both mentally retarded and physically handicapped. Eventually, doctors were able to conclude that Mark was afflicted with a relatively rare condition called Cornelia de Lange syndrome.

Mark shares many of the physical characteristics of de Lange children: a roundish, somewhat oversized head, thick eyebrows, unusually small hands and feet. He has also, quite unfortunately, been cursed with some of the bodily complaints common to the condition. His balance is precarious; he cannot run or jump; and he walks with a lurching, wobbly gait. At fifteen, he is physically unable to pronounce more than a handful of intelligible syllables (though his hearing is normal). Since he cannot chew properly, we must remain vigilant lest he ingest any food that might cause him to choke. Mark has had orthopedic surgery on both feet, and has an arthritic hip which could be the source of serious trouble down the road.

As is the case with many multiply handicapped children, Mark's intelligence is not easy to pinpoint. His IQ was once evaluated at 36, one point above the upper limit for the most severely retarded category. Later, however, we were startled to discover him capable of expressing his needs, his feelings, and even complex thoughts through sign language, or by spelling out sentences on a letter board, with Margaret's assistance. This process is known as facilitated communication, a technique in which those with little or no speech are physically supported while they spell out their thoughts by pointing to letters of the alphabet on a message board, or by typing on computers.

Facilitated communication has generated more than its share of controversy, largely because evidence gathered by this method from autistic children has figured in several widely publicized cases of apparently bogus charges of sexual abuse. Mark himself has revealed his inventiveness by concocting stories about imaginary school friends or class outings which never took place. But facilitated communication has also enabled him to let us know that he is aware he is different and is sad that he cannot play or have friends like normal children. Once, in a store with Margaret, Mark, apparently assuming he was the intended object, became upset at someone's passing remark about a retarded child. Demanding the letter board, he angrily spelled out, "I am not retarded. Not!" On another occasion, after I had exhibited impatience over the tediousness of his routine, he told Margaret: "I would like to be normal, but I am not." (My punctuation in both cases.)

Still, while Mark can—incredibly—spell out in English letters the first few sentences of the Hebrew blessings over Sabbath dinner, he ap-

pears unable to follow the plot of a television cartoon or a *Sesame Street* skit. He also refuses to play by himself, and is satisfied only when someone—usually Margaret or I—participates in one of his infantile games, answers his incessant questions (usually posed through gestures and usually having to do with promised adventures), leads him on a tour of the local shops, or otherwise pays exclusive attention to him.

IN HIS two-volume study, *A History of Mental Retardation*, R.C. Scheerenberger places the origins of Cornelia de Lange syndrome under the classification "Unknown Prenatal Influence." We will probably never know why Mark was born with his many, many problems, and in fact we decided early on that it was pointless to agonize over this question. In any event, once confronted with the formidable responsibilities of his care, we had little time to speculate whether the few glasses of wine Margaret drank during pregnancy or the incompetence of a thoroughly unpleasant delivery nurse might have contributed to Mark's condition. Soon enough, life came to revolve around him and his requirements: his schooling, his therapies, his communication, his medical difficulties.

This is how it is for all parents of severely handicapped children. Margaret and I count ourselves fortunate that Mark at least does not suffer from a condition, like autism, which triggers exotic behaviors and an inability to relate to other people, or even to acknowledge the affection of family members. On the contrary, he is gregarious and likable, a much beloved figure in our Manhattan neighborhood—the mayor of the Upper West Side, he has been called.

When Mark was younger, and his abnormalities less physically obvious, little children often responded to him with benign curiosity, treating him as a mute but friendly giant. Now, however, as a teenager, he often draws a different reaction on our trips to the local playground. Young children eye him with wariness and fear; one little girl, after Mark had plaintively invited her to join him in a game of catch, kept repeating, "Scary boy, scary boy." Her mother was embarrassed—ours is a very liberal neighborhood—but who could blame the child?

Increasingly, therefore, Mark's social life takes place in the world of adults, where, thankfully, he seldom meets rejection, and where the family routine is centered on his enjoyment. Our most deeply troubling thoughts stem from the knowl-

edge that, for Mark, the golden years are right now, when he can count on us to make life interesting and fun. It is said that a serious problem for many retarded adults is a depression spawned of isolation; and indeed Mark, who has grown dependent on the active engagement of adults, tends to lapse into a passive funk when ignored. The one thing we cannot do for him is guarantee his future after he leaves the protection of his family; what lies ahead is something we find too painful to dwell on.

THERE IS some consolation to be had in America's impressive record of care for the retarded, and for the handicapped generally. We tend to forget that other societies do not necessarily share our sense of obligation and humanity toward those who lead a life, in the words of two pre-Nazi German advocates of euthanasia, "without value for itself or society."

The retarded have met especially cruel fates under totalitarian rule. Hitler is said to have murdered 100,000 handicapped Germans as part of a campaign to rid the country of the genetically impure, a project coordinated by an organization euphemistically named the Committee on Research on Hereditary and Constitutional Severe Diseases. In recent years, China has made the retarded the target of a program in some respects more insidious than the Nazi policy of "mercy killing." According to a Human Rights Watch report, the Chinese government has introduced a series of measures designed, in the regime's detoxifying phrase, "to raise the quality of the population." Basically, these measures amount to state coercion based on the principles of "superior births science," the Chinese name for eugenics.

China has been testing out its new policies at the provincial level as a prelude to the adoption of a national program. Thus the Gansu province implemented a law entitled "Regulations Prohibiting Idiots, Imbeciles, and Morons from Having Children." Under this law, retarded couples who plan to marry must be sterilized, and retarded women who become pregnant must undergo abortion. A more draconian law adopted by the Liaoning province applies restrictions to a much wider group, including the mentally ill and those with epilepsy and hemophilia. In addition, women who have already given birth to a "severely defective child," or have "too much or too little amniotic fluid," can be forced to have an abortion at the discretion of a doctor. The law also establishes a bureaucracy, comprised of "eu-

genics health-care supervisors," who are responsible for "supervising and inspecting the work of preventing inferior births."

American achievements are worthy of praise not simply when measured against such extreme antihuman policies as these, but by any reasonable historical standard. Those who castigate America as the epitome of an obsessively acquisitive, winner-take-all society have obviously not bothered to examine the extraordinary—and costly—measures we have adopted over the last half-century for the protection, education, and medical care of our most vulnerable citizens. Perhaps surprisingly, the most unambiguous success story has to do with the institutionalization and then the deinstitutionalization of the mentally retarded.

Prior to the development of institutionalization, those suffering from retardation, epilepsy, or associated conditions were, if not kept at home with their families, then shut away in almshouses or left to roam the streets. Against that background, the push to create residential centers for the retarded, typically in remote rural settings, was seen, rightly, as a progressive step. Instead of facing a life of probable neglect, the retarded would be cared for, fed, given medical attention, and, where feasible, educated and trained for work. At the same time, society would be protected against what were widely thought to be the innate inclinations of the retarded toward criminality and/or sexual promiscuity. Thus, in addition to its educational and humanitarian functions, the institution was meant to segregate a community of potential robbers, rapists, and prostitutes.

It was, indeed, precisely because the retarded were looked on as major contributors to the breakdown of moral and social order that they became the targets of America's own eugenics movement. During the 20's and 30's, the "science" of eugenics had attained a measure of prominence in this country, and the roster of its advocates included many respected social reformers. Eugenics theory identified a correlation between high rates of immigration and what was seen as an upsurge of defective births, and it is likely that alarm over these "findings" played a role in the severe restrictions placed on immigration during the 1920's. Another pillar of the eugenics program, forced sterilization of the retarded and certain groups of physically handicapped adults, also made its mark on American social policy in that period. Eventually, both

popular and expert opinion turned against sterilization, and in the wake of World War II and the Holocaust, eugenically based theories died out almost completely.

UNTIL THE 1960's, the institution system served as America's answer to the challenge of the mentally retarded. While the quality of care varied considerably from one facility to another, the system as a whole marked a vast improvement over previous practice.

During the 60's, however, experts began to question both the efficiency and the humanity of shutting the retarded away for what often amounted to their entire lives. Adding to the alarm was the exposure of indecent conditions at various state-run facilities, the most notorious case in New York being the Willowbrook State School in Staten Island. Soon, tentative questions burgeoned into a politicized movement, one which demanded that residents of large institutions be transferred to small-scale residential settings in local communities and that, where feasible, large institutions be closed.

Critical to the success of this initiative was the political environment of the period. The aftermath of the civil-rights movement saw an explosion of particularist agendas and of demands for group rights and protections. At the same time, social scientists were developing theories which equated large institutions with penitentiaries. The courts played an important role in the process, mandating costly corrections in state institutions of all kinds, and forbidding placements in facilities where conditions were judged to be substandard.

We have now had over a quarter-century to assess the results of deinstitutionalization. In the case of the mentally ill, it has brought us the permanent army of the homeless deranged who haunt America's urban landscape. But in the case of the retarded, the experiment would seem to have been a notable success—indeed, a major achievement of liberal reform.

I strongly suspect that the smooth transition to deinstitutionalization of the retarded is due mainly to their manifest harmlessness—and also to their manifest vulnerability. Where the mentally ill have often been set adrift without a guarantee of a residence or social services, the retarded are never returned to a local community without a place to live—often near the homes of parents or other relatives—and the necessary adult supervision. It has also proved easier to persuade

communities to accept group homes for the retarded than similar facilities for the mentally ill. To be sure, when done properly, deinstitutionalization can be expensive; the early promises of millions in savings—which made the move appealing to elected officials—have rarely materialized. But on the whole, deinstitutionalization has evolved from a risky experiment into an accepted and noncontroversial policy which enjoys wide support from politicians, families of the retarded, and professionals in the field.

IN CONTRAST to the success of deinstitutionalization, another major government initiative for the retarded—"special education"—has become a source of controversy and criticism. Until the mid-70's, the education of retarded and other handicapped children was left to the discretion of the states, where it varied substantially in quantity and quality. But in 1975 Congress passed legislation mandating that the public schools provide a suitable education for all children, no matter how severe their handicap, or else pay for the child's education in a private school.

Although the purpose was to see to the needs of a core group—the mentally retarded plus children with real physical disabilities or emotional troubles—the ensuing years have witnessed a huge increase in students diagnosed as "learning disabled" and referred to special-education programs. Under any circumstances, special education is an expensive proposition—class sizes are small and students have access to a variety of therapists, aides, and counselors—and the program has come to consume a constantly increasing percentage of the public-school budget. Thanks to the ever-expanding definition of "learning disabled" (fully 17 percent of students in Massachusetts have been so diagnosed) and the well-established practice of assigning "problem" students to special-education classes, enrollment shows no sign of stabilizing, much less declining.

In the meantime, another and potentially more serious threat has materialized from the opposite direction, in the form of what is known as the inclusion doctrine. According to this doctrine, children are *poorly* served by separate classes. Supporters of inclusion are pressing for changes which would ultimately lead to the replacement of special education by a system in which the handicapped would be integrated into normal school settings.

The idea of inclusion is not without merit. Some children may indeed be able to participate in the competitive environment of a normal classroom; this is particularly the case with children who suffer from certain physical disabilities, and young children who are only mildly retarded. But for those who advocate "full inclusion," such commonsense measures are not enough. For them, the very concept of retardation is "socially constructed": any perceived differences between those whom society designates retarded and those whom it designates normal are just that—matters of perception. On the basis of such reasoning, some theorists of inclusion characterize special education as the moral equivalent of apartheid, or have even likened it to slavery. It follows that the remedy is to include the handicapped in the entire range of school activities.

IF THERE is one thing we have learned over the past quarter-century, it is that no idea which travels under the banner of the rights and dignity of the individual, especially the individual who carries the victim label, is too radical, unworkable, or unwise to be given respectful consideration by people who should know better. Thus it is with inclusion. Just as multiculturalism insinuated itself into the policy of elite universities with hardly a murmur of public discussion, inclusion is spreading from one school system to the next, pushed along by a small but vocal group of parent advocates, a few social scientists, a scattering of court decisions, school officials eager to adopt it as an instrument for budget control, and, finally, the Clinton administration's Department of Education.

The administration has, in fact, elevated inclusion to something of a moral crusade. Tom Hehir, director of special education for the Department of Education, views disabled people, including the retarded, as a "distinct minority who have been historically subject to discrimination and have now gained full civil rights." The controversy over inclusion, Hehir adds, "is about the idea of it, not the practice of it. Where inclusion has been done well, you don't find teachers or parents adamantly against it."

I find these words chilling. How often have we heard that some policy has failed, or some program has fallen short, only because funding is insufficient, or implementation has been poor, or administrative procedures are flawed—in short, that everything is to blame but the concept itself? "We don't debate rights in this country," says

Hehir. Unfortunately, in this he is correct. Once a social program has been defined as a right, it is extremely difficult to conduct a rational discussion on its merits, particularly when its beneficiaries constitute a class of victims.

And yet bad policies, perpetuated because presumed rights are involved, have over and over again done serious damage to the very institutions that are crucial to the welfare of the group supposedly being benefited. Next to the family, probably no institution has suffered more in this respect than the public schools, and there is every reason to expect that full inclusion of students with significant disabilities will inflict still further harm. Our schools are already charged with promoting racial understanding, combating sexual harassment, educating students about AIDS, discouraging drug and alcohol use, and enhancing self-esteem (in addition to preventing simple violence). These days they are also, properly, facing growing demands to toughen standards, abolish "social" promotions, institute compulsory study of laboratory science and foreign languages, and train students for the global high-technology economy of the future.

With pressures like these, one might expect school boards and administrators to rank among the most vocal critics of radical inclusion formulas. In fact, however, they have been surprisingly supportive of the idea. Some school boards have capitulated to demands for inclusion out of nervousness over threatened litigation. Others have cynically embraced the idea as a cost-saving mechanism (it would do away with separate classes for the disabled). Still others are held in thrall by ideology. A report by the National Association of State Boards of Education endorses inclusion on the sweeping grounds of educational reform, civil rights, and equity. Amazingly, the report ignores the critical question of how the fully inclusive school is to cope with autistic children, or children who exhibit strange and inappropriate behavior, who become violent when frustrated, who are chronically disruptive, or who require exceptional medical attention. No wonder middle-class parents are beginning to cite the ever growing emphasis on "special needs" as among the reasons for transferring their own children from public to private schools.

FOR US, as Mark's parents, inclusion involves much more than an abstract argument over educational policy. Were New York to take this

path, Mark would, according to the logic of inclusion, be transferred from his present school, which is devoted solely to special-education classes, and placed in a regular classroom in our neighborhood high school, a forbidding building with a rough and intimidating student body. Because of his precarious sense of balance and lack of coordination, Mark is physically quite fearful; he goes into a panic if accosted by overly playful small dogs. For him, inclusion in a big-city high school would be an exercise in terror.

Mark would also present his new teachers and classmates with a set of unique problems. He demands constant supervision; he is easily distracted, and requires quite a bit of prodding, vocal encouragement, and physical assistance. Much of his education consists of lessons in "life skills," including dressing and even using the toilet. Although never violent or aggressively recalcitrant, he does have his own special strategies of resistance. Persuading him to do such elementary tasks as cleaning a table or loading a washing machine takes immense patience and a willingness to repeat the activity, again and again and again, until he finally accepts the routine.

The advocates of full inclusion speak glibly of giving teachers the training necessary to cope with the immense variety of challenges which handicapped children bring to the classroom. Yet

no amount of training could prepare a regular teacher for Mark. In our experience, the requisite expertise and commitment are found only among teachers who have chosen to specialize in the handicapped.

Through Mark, our family has experienced, up close and personal, the vagaries of American social policy during a period of bitter division over practically every question of domestic life. Can we say, on the basis of our experience, that these social policies work? Yes and no. Deinstitutionalization of the retarded—again, not of the mentally ill—ranks as one of the more impressive examples of social reform. Special education, although subject to very serious abuse and overdue for reform, is by no means the unmitigated disaster its critics charge. But the drive to ditch this flawed program in favor of a radical alternative will almost certainly result in just such a disaster.

All in all, America's treatment of the retarded in recent decades offers an object lesson in the promotion of that much-sought-after social good, family values. One can only hope that, in this instance at least, we will not repeat the pattern—so glaringly obvious in the welfare mess and elsewhere—of sabotaging our genuine achievements in the pursuit of worthy-sounding but deeply wrongheaded ideas.

What "Operation Restore Democracy" Restored

Mark Falcoff

THE ELECTION of René Préval to the presidency of Haiti last December, followed by the staged departure of American troops after a year-long occupation, is being hailed as a major foreign-policy success for the United States, and for the Clinton administration in particular. Not only (it is said) did we restore Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power three years after his overthrow by a military junta; we also engineered an orderly transition from one civilian-elected president to another, virtually the only such transition in Haitian history, and we effectively demobilized and disarmed the Haitian armed forces, a major source of political instability. We did all this, moreover, in concert with the United Nations, thus conferring international authority on our actions.

In brief, a victory for democracy, and a rebuke to those who predicted a Haitian quagmire. But is it, in fact, democracy the Clinton administration brought to Haiti in its "Operation Restore Democracy"? True, we did engineer the return of Aristide; and, true, two election cycles (one for parliament, one to select Aristide's successor) were held during the U.S.-UN military occupation. By almost any other standard, however, Haiti remains light years away from our stated political objectives, and, what is more to the point, shows few signs of moving in the right direction.

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There is, first and foremost, the issue of Aristide himself, still the dominant political figure on the island. A former Salesian priest who rose to prominence in the late years of the Duvalier regime,* Aristide was elected in 1990 as the candidate of a coalition of opposition parties, the National Front for Change and Democracy (FNCD). During his eight months in office in 1991, Aristide, an accomplished demagogue who specializes in spellbinding speeches in Creole, revealed an authoritarian appetite which alienated not only the major power centers of Haitian society—the church, the business community, the military—but many of his friends as well. Not content with purging former supporters of the Duvaliers, Aristide began to replace newly-elected mayors, many of whom had compiled long records of fighting the Duvalier dictatorship, with local committees drawn from his own Lavalas movement. He named judges on his own recognizance, and preferred to govern through an inner circle of followers selected wholly on the basis of personal loyalty or ideological affinity.

If coalition politics was not to Aristide's taste, neither was having to negotiate with the Haitian congress. By mid-1991, relations between the two branches of the government had deteriorat-

*François Duvalier ("Papa Doc") ruled from 1957 until his death in 1971; his son, Jean-Claude ("Baby Doc"), from 1971 to 1986.

ed to the point that Aristide's supporters were openly threatening legislators with the "Père Lebrun," the local version of "necklacing"—being put to death with a burning, gasoline-soaked tire dropped over one's head.

Far from calling for calm, Aristide, in his public pronouncements, often seemed to endorse his more fanatical followers, once offering this paean to the Père Lebrun: "What a nice tool! What a nice device! . . . It is elegant, attractive, splendid, graceful, and dazzling. It smells good. Wherever you go, you feel like smelling it!"

When Haiti's legislators began to debate a vote of no-confidence in August 1991, pro-Aristide mobs invaded the galleries and threatened to necklace offending members. The crisis reached fever pitch in September, at which point the Haitian army ousted Aristide, and he escaped with his life thanks only to the intervention of the French, Venezuelan, and U.S. governments.

For saving his neck, neither the Bush nor the Clinton administration received much gratitude from Aristide, a man with a long career of vitriolic anti-Americanism. Installed in the Haitian embassy in Washington and counseled by a small army of expensive lobbyists, he cheered on the massive numbers of Haitians who were departing their island on flimsy rafts and balsa-wood boats and thus creating a major immigration crisis for the United States. At the same time, he turned aside all attempts at a compromise political solution brokered by the State Department and even favored by some of his supporters at home. In the end, President Clinton was hoist with the petard of his own 1992 campaign promises to restore Aristide to power. After suffering a major foreign-policy humiliation by withdrawing a warship from Port-au-Prince in October 1993 in the face of Haitian demonstrators on the wharf, he had to face either further embarrassment at the hands of the Haitian military or invasion and occupation of the country. Reluctantly, he chose the latter.

THERE ARE those who claim that Aristide's behavior during his first period in office is now yesterday's news—no longer relevant to Haitian political realities. But in fact it serves to reveal how Aristide conducts himself when there is no international authority breathing down his neck. And it also explains why the opposition in Haiti today is led not, as Aristide and his epigones would have it, by "oligarchs" or *ma-*

coutes,* but by people who formed part of the original FNCD coalition.

Indeed, even *with* an international authority breathing down his neck, things did not change much between the time of Aristide's return in October 1994 and the elections last December. Although polls showed him the overwhelming favorite of eight out of ten Haitians, he and his followers seemed deeply offended by the notion that there should be other political forces in the country, even ones with democratic credentials, and they attempted with some success to neuter such forces or drive them underground. This they accomplished through the uninhibited use of all the discretionary devices traditionally afforded by political power in Haiti to assure favorable electoral outcomes—including the unauthorized disbursement of government resources, complicated registration procedures which effectively disenfranchised opponents, and packing the election boards with loyalists and party hacks.

Thus, the first round of congressional elections held in June 1995—Exhibit A for Operation Restore Democracy—was sufficiently irregular to provoke criticism even by the Carter Center, which monitored them. Despite the Clinton administration's relentlessly upbeat evaluation of the balloting, Robert Pastor, who drafted the Center's report, concluded that

overall, of the thirteen elections that I have observed, the June 25 Haitian elections were the most disastrous technically, and the counting process was the worst. . . . I personally witnessed more instances of fraud than I had ever seen in an election.

According to a poll commissioned the following month by the United States Information Agency, only 43 percent of Haitians considered elections in their country to be honest. As if in testimony to this perception, voter participation in the December presidential elections would be less than half what it had been five years earlier.

In the run-up to those elections, the Aristide administration would employ a policy of calculated ambiguity to keep the opposition parties off-balance. After weeks of rumors that the contest would be held sometime in January, the December 17 date was suddenly announced on November 6, with the deadline for filing just

*The *tontons macoute* were the Duvaliers' private security force, which terrorized the Haitian population for the better part of three decades.

nine days later. The early date effectively prevented potential contenders from raising money from their supporters in the Haitian diaspora, the only possible source of campaign financing.

No sooner was the voting date announced, moreover, than the streets of Port-au-Prince and other cities were covered with graffiti (and later, printed posters) demanding "Three More Years," that is, that Aristide unilaterally extend his term as president to compensate for the time lost in exile—a violation both of the Haitian constitution and of his solemn promise to President Clinton. Demonstrations to this effect were mounted by "popular organizations" owned and operated by Lavalas, and they often outshone the campaign rallies for Préval, the party's own putative presidential candidate. Though Aristide did finally announce he would step down, he conspicuously refrained from endorsing Préval until 48 hours before Haitians were due to go to the polls.

Not that the outcome was in doubt. Although fourteen candidates appeared on the presidential ballot, Préval's only serious challenger was Victor Benoit of the National Committee of the Congress of Democratic Movements, part of the original FNCD coalition. Leaders of other non-Lavalas political forces chose to sit out the contest. Given the circumstances, their discretion was unquestionably the better part of valor: even before the date was set, Aristide and his followers had effectively cleared the field of serious opposition, not only by chicanery but by intimidation, threats, and acts of violence.

THIS BRINGS us to Haiti's troubled internal-security situation. Supporters of Aristide and the newly elected President Préval never tire of warning that once foreign troops have departed, the principal danger facing the Haitian government will be a recrudescence of paramilitary right-wing groups like those that terrorized the population during the three years of military rule. It is difficult to see, however, whence this threat is supposed to come. The UN authority directly confiscated or bought back some 30,000 weapons, and the armed forces themselves have been dismantled. While individual incidents of right-wing terrorism can never be wholly ruled out in Haiti, as an organized political force the Right has been effectively broken. Most of its principal leaders and erstwhile financial supporters are out of the country, and—more pertinently—they no longer enjoy a privileged asso-

ciation with the official forces of order. Indeed, those forces are being replaced by a new Haitian national police, created and trained by the UN mission.

If truth be told, the principal security threat in Haiti today, as indeed for most of its history, is the government itself. And now another wrinkle has been added by the government's penchant for seizing upon incidents of doubtful political relevance to silence or terrorize its critics.

A case in point involves the murder last November of Lavalas deputy Jean-Hubert Feuille, a cousin of Aristide. The president promptly attributed this act to a vast *macoutiste* plot. Speaking on nationwide radio and television at Feuille's funeral service, Aristide urged Haitians to accompany policemen in weapons searches—in effect, to take the law into their own hands. He thereby unleashed an orgy of violence across the country in which private homes were burned, people were threatened and killed, and media sources not viewed as pro-Aristide were attacked by mobs.

In the days and weeks that followed—in other words, just before the scheduled "free and fair" elections for president—opposition politicians became favored targets of vigilantes. The office of the mayor of Port-au-Prince was sprayed by gunfire (two days earlier, he had accused Aristide of corruption). After repeated death threats and the torching of his home, Pierre Duly Brutus, former president of the Chamber of Deputies and a veteran Haitian democrat, was forced to seek exile in the United States. A squad of gunmen peppered the home of an independent presidential candidate who happened to be another (distant) cousin of Aristide. If incidents like these could take place under the nose of the UN security force, what can be expected once it has departed?

As for the weapons seized by the mobs "accompanying" the Haitian police, these have largely disappeared, or been stored without proper accounting in police arsenals. One persistent rumor is that they have been issued to special Lavalas cadres being trained on a ranch that was formerly the property of the Duvalier family. If this is the case, it would appear that Aristide and Préval are simply replicating the practice of past Haitian presidents and setting up a private force of their own to counterbalance the official forces of order—namely, the Keystone Cops formed by the United Nations and the United States to replace the Haitian military.

IF THE democratic foundations of Haiti's new political order are of dubious quality, so, too, is the promise of long-term stability which underpinned much of the original U. S. decision to intervene. Préval assumes office under uniquely inauspicious circumstances. It is arguable that the only real center of political power in the country remains Aristide, and he has made no secret of the fact that he expects to come back in five years' time, when the Haitian constitution permits him to run again. In the meantime, he will no doubt go on perfecting his talent for demagoguery. As one veteran of the Haitian Left put it recently, "Aristide has no interest in political parties, not even one of his own. His goal is not a one-party state but a mob permanently turning about his person."

Préval's job will be made all the harder by the fact that his predecessor studiously avoided making necessary economic decisions right up to the end of his term. The poorest country in the hemisphere, Haiti has been rendered far poorer by the economic embargo imposed by the international community (at the urging of the United States) during the last year of military rule. While this action failed in its stated purpose—namely, to persuade the Haitian generals to step down and allow Aristide to return—it did effectively eliminate the greater part of the country's modern private sector. Assembly plants, which a decade ago offered work to some 80,000 people, today provide employment for only a tenth of that number. Political uncertainty and the precarious security environment have done nothing, so far, to lure back capital, domestic or foreign.

Haiti is surviving on a kind of international life-support system. Over the past year it has been pledged \$1.2 billion worth of grants and loans (one-quarter of the total from the United States), but foreign aid alone will never make the island economically viable. Much of what has been promised has not been disbursed, pending economic reforms which have yet to occur, and there are reasons to doubt that such reforms will ever be instituted. Over the years, Aristide has denounced capitalism as a mortal sin, and privatization as an instrument of U.S.

imperialism. After his return in 1994 he blew hot and cold on the subject, depending on whether his audience was Haitian or foreign. But his actions spoke louder than his words: in one case he simply refused to open the bids for state industries put up for auction; in another he threatened to imprison anyone who sold them off.

Aristide's view, expressed repeatedly, is that Haiti has the right to fashion its own economic model, free of market logic or even a commitment to growth in the conventional sense of the term. In his scheme, the job of the international community ("the rich countries") is to keep the checks coming regularly, without comment or complaint. When, in late 1995, this presumption proved a bit much even for the Clinton administration, which was holding up \$100 million waiting for progress in privatization, Aristide responded by urging Haitians dissatisfied with their lot to take to the seas, and then turned aside U.S. protests with the arch observation that "some friends are urging us to create jobs, while on the other side they are withholding money which can be used to create jobs and keep the refugees here."

This was a reprise of the tactics Aristide used so successfully to force the U.S. to act in September 1994; it is also a preview of things to come. Both Aristide and Préval clearly expect to leverage the Clinton administration's fears—of a new refugee crisis, of a major foreign-policy setback in an election year, of pressure from the black political establishment in the United States—into a kind of unconditional political support. In Haiti, the Clinton administration has so heavily mortgaged American prestige and credibility that it is probably too late to cut our losses. Aristide and Préval know this, and act accordingly.

Even the Duvaliers at their putatively most anti-Communist could never have hoped to extract as much from Washington as Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his successor have already extracted, and can yet hope to extract, with their anti-Americanism, both overt and covert. If this be a triumph, it is difficult to imagine what a failure would look like.

A Michelin Noir

Barbara Lerner

HISTORIES OF FRANCE during World War II usually mention the “Vel d’Hiv” round-up of July 16, 1942. On that and the following day, 9,000 French policemen, acting on the orders of their national chief, René Bousquet, blanketed Paris in search of foreign-born Jews. They went door-to-door in apartment buildings and bed-to-bed in hospitals, carting off on stretchers those who could not walk and then sweeping the streets and the cafés. The 12,884 arrestees were confined in the Velodrome d’Hiver sports arena for five days, then sorted out and sent to one of five concentration camps, most within a few kilometers of Paris: Pithiviers, Beaune-la-Rolonde, Compiègne, Rieucros, or Drancy, a way-station to Auschwitz. The round-up was a very public event, and the initial internment was in a very public place. The Vel d’Hiv is on a busy street: the Jews jammed into it had little food or water and less in the way of toilet facilities; the crying of the 4,051 infants and children was audible to every passerby.

Confronted by this hubbub, the French public did nothing. Neither, by and large, did the intellectuals: Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir were in Paris then, along with a host of oth-

er luminaries, yet Vel d’Hiv is mentioned neither in their voluminous correspondence nor in their published diaries. Today this reticence may seem strange—doubly so, since in 1942 the German boot rested relatively lightly on conquered France, and some expression of protest or sympathy would not have been unthinkable.

But the reason for the silence may be simple. By that time, round-ups and concentration camps had been a staple of French life *for four years*, and had aroused hardly a peep. Most of the camps had been established long before the summer of 1942; before the Germans conquered France and occupied half of it in the summer of 1940; and even before the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939. They were not, originally, intended specifically for Jews, and indeed at first their population was mostly non-Jewish, although that would change with time.

By 1942, sweeps and detention centers were old news for the French public, not to mention for the French police who ran some of the camps, the French military who ran others, and the armies of civil servants who kept track of the whole thing with an elaborate index-card system, all under the direction of a powerful cabinet-level bureaucracy that has no counterpart in American life—the Interior Ministry.

The French role in the deportations of 1942 has been officially acknowledged by the government (though only very recently). The story of

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the camps, however, continues to be shrouded in a curtain of official silence. The only Interior Ministers of the period with relatively clean hands in the matter—Marx Dormoy, who held the post in the government of Léon Blum in 1936-37, and Georges Mandel, who held it briefly under Paul Reynaud in 1940—were both later assassinated by French fascists while in the custody of the French police. As for the archives relating to the camps, they were sealed after the war. Still-classified files for 1939 will not be available until 1999, and for 1944 until 2004.

To be sure, the existence of these camps is not a complete secret, though the French government still acts as if it were. Both the German-born philosopher Hannah Arendt and the Hungarian-born intellectual Arthur Koestler spent time in the camps, and both went on to write of their (very different) experiences. Foreign relief workers were allowed in some, as were a very few persistent foreign correspondents, Eric Sevareid of CBS radio among them. Yet with little documentation available, even the best historical accounts of the period are rife with errors about such basic questions as the number of camps, their location, the dates of internment, and the identity of the internees. In their path-breaking book, *Vichy France and the Jews* (1981), the American scholars Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton estimated that there were 52 camps—31 in unoccupied southern France, 15 in the occupied northern zone, and six in French North Africa—but stamp collectors who can recognize the distinctive postal markings on letters to and from inmates know of many more.

For almost a decade now, I have been attempting to piece together the story of these camps by gathering and sifting the available facts; reviewing written memoirs and oral-history recordings by former inmates; and checking their testimonies against one another, against accounts given by French, British, and American witnesses, and against accounts of survivors I have interviewed personally. The elements of the puzzle that have emerged do not yet form a definitive guidebook, but they do suffice for a kind of *Michelin noir*.

IN THE 1930's, animus against foreigners was rampant across the French political spectrum, and for a variety of reasons. There was anger at immigrant workers in a time of economic depression, and concern about a series of highly publicized corruption scandals, some in-

volving foreigners, in government and industry. There was fear of social change; hatred of Communists; and a well-nigh universal worry about being dragged by foreign "warmongers" into a conflict with Germany. All these anxieties contributed to the election of Edouard Daladier, a "peace" candidate, to the premiership in 1938; not incongruously, they were also the animating force behind the decree later that year establishing concentration camps—*centres*—for "undesirable foreigners."

The first round of internments, involving 500,000 prisoners, was also the most massive. In the fall and winter of 1938-39, the defeated forces of Republican Spain had converged on the French border in lines that stretched for miles, fatally exposed to air and artillery attacks from Franco's circling armies. The French did their utmost to keep the refugees out, but the tide proved unstoppable.

Once in France, the refugees were sorted into three categories. Some 250,000 men, soldiers and civilians alike, were placed in regular camps, most of them in and around the Pyrenees. Another quarter-million women and children were scattered throughout France in over 2,000 locations: barracks, fortresses, prisons, sports arenas, and bull rings. Those already on French blacklists—political and intellectual leaders, or members of the predominantly Communist International Brigades—were sent to special punishment camps like Collioure, a medieval dungeon, or Le Vernet, a modern one.

No outsiders were allowed to visit the punishment camps; we know about them mainly through the testimony of surviving inmates. Arthur Koestler, who had been condemned to death in Spain, was in Le Vernet from October 1939 to January 1940, and would report frequent and occasionally deadly beatings. Elsewhere, the norm was complete neglect. Francesca Wilson, a British relief worker, visited the concentration camp of Argelès-sur-mer in April 1939, when most inmates had already been there for about four months, through the winter. On a cold and arid strip of Mediterranean shoreline, she found 80,000 men behind double rows of barbed wire. There were a few crowded, unfurnished huts for the very sick, but most inmates found what shelter they could by digging shallow burrows in the wet sand. Food was scarce and generally spoiled; the drinking water was polluted; there were no latrines. Inmates were prevented from wading into the sea to wash away the lice, fleas, and ex-

crement. Thousands succumbed to pneumonia, dysentery, typhus, gangrene, and starvation. These conditions would remain unchanged for two years until, in mid-1941, the camp was evacuated after a flood.

Donald Lowrie, an American relief worker, visited seven camps, beginning with Gurs. This was in November 1940, and by then, in addition to Spanish men, women, and children, Gurs also held new inmates from Germany, Austria, the Lowlands, and elsewhere. The food at Gurs was just as scarce and rotten as at Argelès-sur-mer, and the toll it had taken, especially on the Spaniards, was plain to see: "Two years of camp fare had left them all as thin as sticks—poor legs and ankles so thin it hurt to look at them." Although most of the inmates lived in huts, these were crowded, unheated, unlit, and windowless. The whole camp was "a sea of mud."

The new inmates noted by Donald Lowrie belonged to the second cohort of internees, known to French officials as *Allemands*. For the most part these were anti-fascist Germans who had emigrated after Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor in 1933, but the category also included Italians who had left for France after Mussolini took power in 1922; pro-French Saarlanders who arrived after their territory was returned to Germany in 1935; and Austrians and Czechs who came in 1938, after the *Anschluss* in March and the Munich "peace" agreement in September. The Saarlanders numbered 6,000; a conservative estimate puts the total of the others at 50,000, of whom 50 to 70 percent were Jews.

The ordeal of these anti-fascists began with the outbreak of World War II. Because of their status as enemy aliens, their bank accounts were frozen by the French government and the adult males among them were ordered to report to sports arenas throughout the country. Eager to prove their loyalty to France, and innocent of the depth of French antipathy toward them, they not only complied with the order but volunteered in large numbers for the army, as did also thousands of refugee Spaniards. The French military, however, was unreceptive; indeed, 10,000 Spaniards who had been provisionally accepted by the army and all the *Allemands* who had enlisted months before were stripped of their uniforms and assigned to forced labor or returned to the camps. Meanwhile, new camps were being established, many in northern or central France.

Alex Mathes, a third-generation baker from a small village in Germany before the war, spent

two years in three different French camps. Mathes had been interned in Buchenwald in November 1938; released after six weeks, he got on his motorcycle and rode to Brussels to join relatives there. He was working in a bakery on May 10, 1940—his twenty-ninth birthday—when he was seized in the street by a gang of Belgian fascists and forced, like thousands of other foreign refugees, into sealed cattle cars which were then sent hurtling across the border into France. The French soldiers who unsealed his car robbed him of his watch and money, carted him about for a time while awaiting proper orders, then dumped him in St.-Cyprien where he served in the privileged position of cook. Mathes would later estimate the death toll in St.-Cyprien and Gurs alone at 30 to 35 a day.

Over a period of months in late 1939 and early 1940, the *Allemand* men—hungry, dirty, shaken, and sick—were released. Kept under surveillance and restricted in their movements, the men were rearrested in early May and interned a second time, mostly in the north; their mothers, wives, and children were kept in separate camps in the south. That same month, the long-dormant period on the Western Front known as "the phony war" came to an end. As German armies smashed through the Low Countries on their way to conquering France, many northern inmates were discharged; others overwhelmed their guards and broke away. Yet of all those who got out of the camps that spring, only a fraction ever escaped what the German novelist Lion Feuchtwanger called "this mousetrap of a France."

Koestler was rescued by strong British diplomatic pressure on his behalf. Of the others, about 3,000—including the writer Heinrich Mann and the artists Marc Chagall, Jacques Lipchitz, and Max Ernst—escaped through an underground network set up by Varian Fry, a courageous young American sent to Marseilles by the International Rescue Committee with a list of people to save.

Of the rest, a few managed to bribe their way into Switzerland or to cross the Pyrenees on foot into Spain. But the vast majority were trapped. In 1942 they were arrested for a third time, then transferred to Drancy in the company of their wives and children. They were among the first aboard the trains to Auschwitz.

THIS BRINGS us back to the Jews who had already been living in France itself—first the foreign-born, then the native-born. The funda-

mental story of France's role in the Holocaust can be told by means of a few comparative numbers. In Holland, a country of fewer than nine million in 1940, the Germans needed 5,000 of their own police to hunt down Jews. In France, then a country of some 40 million, they deployed only half that number. The small contingent sufficed because the Germans had help. As Marrus and Paxton show in exhaustive detail, the French police acted against the Jews even before German orders were issued and, in many instances, went beyond anything demanded of them.

When the war began, there were about 170,000 East European Jews living in France, most of whom had come from Poland in the 1920's and 30's. These *Ostjuden* generally were working class, and the majority lived in Paris. Beginning in 1940, the French enacted an escalating series of restrictive measures. Prior to 1942, those caught violating them—often teenagers going to the movies—were sent to prison, not to the camps. But by 1942, all foreign-born Jews were being sent to the camps and then deported to Germany. Only the 90,000 or so Jews born to families whose French citizenship went back many generations were still largely exempt. Their turn would come the following year.

In the meantime, there was the problem of the children. Many parents about to be deported knew what a transfer to Drancy meant, and begged to leave their sons or daughters behind. Initially, French officials acquiesced: they stamped "abandoned" on the children's papers, turned them over to Jewish charities, and then proceeded to debate what to do with them. At the time, the Germans were insisting only that deportation quotas for adults be met. The French, on their own, decided that the children ought to be shipped to Auschwitz as well.

THUS BEGAN the great French orphan hunt. Most of the Jewish youngsters lived in registered group homes and were easy enough to find, but a few thousand temporarily escaped capture, and had to be ferreted out. One well-known story concerns the villagers of Izieu, who went to heroic lengths to save the 44 Jewish children in their care, only to see 43 of them carted off by the Gestapo. The story of Izieu is not apocryphal, and taken at face value it does credit to France under the occupation. But the larger truth surrounding it is less comforting. The people of Izieu were Huguenots, with their

own long history of persecution in Catholic France. Huguenots in general tended to do what they could to help other persecuted groups during the war years, something which could be said of only a tiny fraction of French Catholics.

Also atypical in the story of Izieu was that it was a Gestapo man who led the raid on it. The man in question was Klaus Barbie, the "Butcher of Lyons," a ravenous sadist who could not stay away from the action, wherever it was. Most of his fellow Nazi officers, by contrast, were more than happy to let such matters be handled by the French police, who were very efficient at the job. In Louis Malle's 1988 movie about the orphan hunt, *Au Revoir les Enfants*, all the arresting officers are German, and all the French priests are kind. In fact, however, when it came to foreigners or Jews, the French Church, with a few splendid exceptions, did little to arouse priests or parishioners to their Christian duty.

It was not until 1943 that the amiable arrangements between the occupiers and their French henchmen began to sour. That February, the Germans ordered the conscription of military-age Frenchmen for factory work in Germany. For the first time, the occupation and the collaborationist Vichy government became seriously unpopular. The bulk of those who joined the Resistance did so after this date.

In July, the Germans took control of a few of the French camps, including Drancy; this actually led to an improvement in conditions. In August, they began to arrest and intern French Jews. For once, the French disapproved and made their displeasure known. However deep-rooted their anti-Semitism, it was trumped by their nationalism, and these Jews were, after all, not aliens but French citizens.

By that time, however, little could be done. Some Jews found a temporary haven in the eight departments of France occupied by the Italians, who had never paid much heed to anti-Semitic ideology and who forcefully rejected French demands to turn over Jews in the areas they controlled. But the respite ended in September when Italy surrendered to the Allies. Italian forces had to be hastily evacuated, and the French and the Germans swarmed in to claim their prey. By war's end, 76,000 of France's Jews had been deported to German camps where all but 2,500 perished, and uncounted thousands more had died in French camps.

WHAT ARE we to make of this episode in French history, and especially of its well-hidden early chapters? One person who thought about the camps was Hannah Arendt, who had been among the thousands of *Allemand* women interned in Gurs in May 1940. The following month, the camp gates swung briefly open, and Arendt made her way to a wealthy patron of hers who had taken a house nearby, and then got out of France as quickly as she could. But she never forgot the women she had been interned with, and she spoke often of the ones who did not leave when it was fleetingly possible to do so. As her admiring biographer, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, has put it:

Arendt told . . . the story of those who stayed behind at Gurs whenever she wanted to illustrate specifically the price that must be paid for misplaced confidence and refusal to act.

It is a perverse illustration. Arendt was healthy, childless, and well-connected, yet even so it took seven months and plenty of dumb luck before she and her husband could leave for America. The overwhelming majority of women at Gurs had no such advantages; many were sick; and most of the younger ones had small children with them, were left with little or no money, and had already bartered away any possessions to buy black-market food from their guards. Anyway, whether they left the camp or stayed, their chances of getting out of France were negligible. In Gurs, at least, they had a better chance of being found by their husbands, so that they might face together what lay ahead.

More clear-sighted in his appraisal was Arthur Koestler, who entitled his book on the camps *Scum of the Earth*. It is an ironic title: scum of the earth was what the French thought of the anti-fascists they interned, whom they regarded as Communists or worse. But as Koestler shows, most had never been Communists, or had rejected the party long before their internment. Thus, if they could be said to have made the mistake which Arendt called "misplaced confidence," they made it not in 1940 but in the 1930's, when they chose France as the place to raise a standard against fascism on the continent.

As I noted earlier, the entire topic of French collaboration with the Nazis, not to mention the system of prewar concentration camps, has long been bound in a deep official silence—certainly for as long as men of the Vichy generation were

at the helm of the French government. François Mitterrand, the last leader to hail from that era, had himself been an active member of a fascist party before the war, and an honored member of the Vichy regime during it; like many others, he, too, joined the resistance only in 1943. His life-long close friend was René Bousquet, the police chief who organized the round-up at the Vel d'Hiv. Out of whatever motives, Mitterrand spent his years in office determined to bury ugly truths about the past.

With Mitterrand's departure from the stage, however, a degree of glasnost has arrived, and with it a measure of atonement. Jacques Chirac, Mitterrand's successor as President, was all of six years old when World War II began, and eleven when Allied soldiers drove the Germans out of France in 1944. Within weeks of taking office, he delivered a public apology for France's role in the deportation of Jews to German death camps. "The criminal folly of the occupiers," he told a memorial gathering held on the anniversary of the Vel d'Hiv round-up, "was seconded by the French, by the French state." In so saying, he became the first postwar French leader to acknowledge his nation's responsibility for actions of the Vichy regime.

Chirac's statement certainly marks a milestone, but many more will have to pass before any real semblance of historical accountability will have been effected. For one thing, Chirac's gesture was immediately denounced in many quarters, and principally by leaders of Mitterrand's Socialist party; while not contesting the historical facts, they insisted that the Vichy government had been illegitimate and unrepresentative, and hence not French at all.

For another thing, Chirac's statement touched only upon the 1942 round-ups and deportations. He said nothing about the earlier internments, or about the camp system itself. Moreover, the bureaucracies under his command persist in keeping the relevant archives fastened shut. Without access to them, a definitive account of this black chapter of French history cannot be written.

Even Germany and Russia, with their infinitely more terrible histories, with their immense and deadly archipelagos of camps, have succeeded in looking squarely into the mirror of the past. In the case of Russia, the archives on the gulag had begun to be opened even before the end of the era of Communist rule. How long will it be, one wonders, before anything similar can be reported of democratic, republican France?

OBSERVATIONS

Countercultural Auden

Christopher Caldwell

W.H. AUDEN was the last person to write in the English poetic tradition without irony or an overarching sense of archaism. It is his engagement with the world at large that sets his work apart from other, superficially similar, "traditional" English poetry of this century: the nostalgic rhymes of John Betjeman, for instance, or even the lyrics of Philip Larkin, which, however sharply observed, retreat from wider involvements (not excluding love) into the prison of an individual consciousness.

Auden's life has been related in ample detail by Humphrey Carpenter (1981) and Charles Osborne (1979), the poems dissected with considerable patience in Edward Mendelson's *Early Auden* (1981), Samuel Hynes's *The Auden Generation* (1972), and Anthony Hecht's magisterial *The Hidden Law* (1993). Now there is a new biography by Richard Davenport-Hines*; it acknowledges a heavy debt to Carpenter, but aspires to give us an Auden for the 1990's.

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Wystan Hugh Auden was born in 1907 in York, the son of a prominent doctor who was also an amateur psychologist and naturalist. At public school, Auden prepared for a career in the natural sciences, while developing a passion for poetry and discovering himself to be homosexual. At Oxford, though an indifferent student, he was a dazzling conversationalist, an original thinker, and a slow but diligent crafter of unusual poems.

In an England hungry for "new voices," the annual *Oxford Poetry* was eagerly awaited and dutifully read, even outside the university. Auden's contributions to the 1927 edition, which he co-edited, made him well known in London literary circles. When Stephen Spender privately printed Auden's first collection in 1928, it was reviewed widely; with the publication of *Poems* in 1930, Auden was suddenly, at the age of twenty-three, famous. In hindsight, we can see that this youthful poetry was vastly overrated by contemporary critics, possibly because it cannily exploited their tendency to value obscurity for its own sake. But his early

work made Auden the undisputed intellectual leader of a generation of poets that included Spender, Louis MacNeice, and Cecil Day-Lewis, and he grew into the role.

Auden spent 1928 and 1929 in Berlin, where he split his time between debaucheries with working-class "rent boys" and readings in the kind of mediumistic psychology that is now best known through the later work (especially the essays) of D.H. Lawrence. Alarmed, to say the least, by the rise of fascism, he embraced the watered-down Marxism of the English intellectual classes, though without becoming a Communist. In 1937 he visited the Spanish civil war; in 1938, the Sino-Japanese war.

On his way back from China, Auden, by now a poet with an international following, made his first trip to the United States, and soon decided to become an American citizen and to settle in New York. Here, too, he fell in love with Chester Kallman, a dissolute, Brooklyn-born librettist fourteen years his junior who would be his collaborator and on-again, off-

**Auden*. Pantheon, 406 pp., \$30.00.

again partner for the rest of his life. At the same time, Auden was gradually coming to renounce the leftist ideas that had drawn him to Spain, and was being lured back to the Christianity in which he had been reared. In 1939, he converted to Anglicanism.

At this point in his career, his poetry also began to take on the oratorical majesty for which it is still read today. Even at his most radical, Auden had preferred strictly metered verse, and by his late twenties he had thoroughly mastered English, Latin, Italian, and French prosody. He wrote memorable ballads, alcaics, villanelles, Catullan hendecasyllabics, Beowulfian alliterative rhymes, rondeaus, rondels, and fourteeners, epic poems in heroic couplets and rhyme royal, and sonnet cycles. And this is not to mention an extraordinary output of librettos, anthologies, and critical essays.

The poetry fell off in the 1960's, as alcohol and benzedrine took their toll, and as Auden grew content with a less formal, less demanding idiom (as do so many English-language poets who move to the United States). But the hundred or so poems he wrote between the late 1930's and the mid-1950's are sufficient to place him among the two dozen most important poets in the language.

AUDEN'S WAS a double life, and any biographer must come to terms with a paradox: that his very nonconformity was what drove his poetry so consistently toward formalism, and his character toward orthodoxy. In Auden's homosexuality, his leftism, his early fondness for psychiatric cranks, and even his flight to America on the eve of World War II, there was a measure of nonsense—yet all of these insulated him in his formative years from the *mainstream* nonsense of European society. As a result, when he finally embraced bourgeois society at the beginning of World War II, it was the bour-

geois society not of his contemporaries' but of his parents' generation; the voice that came most naturally to Auden was that of the punctilious Victorian. He was a forward-looking throwback.

That Auden's traditionalism arose directly out of a countercultural bent is clear, for instance, in the way his love poetry arose from the confusion of his sex drives. For one thing, while Auden inclined more and more to monogamy as he aged, in Kallman he was saddled with a promiscuous gadabout for a mate. For another, while he had no doubt of his own homosexuality, he showed a profound ambivalence toward homosexuality itself. At twenty-one, he was engaged to a nurse. He married Thomas Mann's daughter Erika (to win her refugee status as she fled Nazism) in 1935. He proposed to a neighbor on the island of Ischia in 1952, and to his New York neighbor and confidante, Hannah Arendt, shortly after the death of her husband, Heinrich Bluecher, in 1970. In 1969, he wrote:

Few if any homosexuals can honestly boast that their sex-life has been happy. . . . All sexual desire presupposes that the loved one is in some way "other" than the lover: the eternal and, probably, insoluble problem for the homosexual is finding a substitute for the natural differences, anatomical and psychic, between a man and a woman.

"I'm no advocate of the purely Uranian society myself," Auden once said. "I mean, I certainly don't want to live *only* with queers." In other words, Auden understood that not everyone loved as he did, and this realization turned what might have been a source of weakness in his poetry into a source of strength. His genderless and passionate love lyrics—"Underneath the abject willow . . .," "Dear, though the night is gone . . .," "Lay your sleeping

head, my love . . ."—are triumphant 20th-century instances of what Keats called "*negative capability*," that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." For a reader, this amounts to the generous assumption that one will have a romantic imagination large enough to supply the specifics, so long as the poet supplies the vision.

Auden's ambivalence is not something his new biographer wishes to dwell on. To the contrary, Davenport-Hines bends over backward to preach the unambiguous normality of Auden's sex life, and sometimes descends to browbeating to do it. Thus, of the June 1940 parliamentary motion that would have either stripped Auden of British citizenship or forced him to return from the U.S. for immediate conscription, Davenport-Hines writes: "The force behind the campaign was a loathing of mental or sexual heterodoxy." George Orwell's criticisms of Auden's poetry in the 1930's, he says, were "a piece of Etonian bullying," or perhaps evidence of suppressed homosexuality. And so forth.

As against Davenport-Hines's tiresome preachments ("There is nothing unusual in two people who have ceased to be lovers remaining intimate friends. . . . Nor is it unique for ex-lovers to share an apartment and enjoy one another's lives"), it is not too much to suppose that the *épatant* nature of the company Auden kept is precisely what made him more attentive to the charms of bourgeois conduct. "Art is small beer," he once observed. "The really serious things in life are earning one's living so as not to be a parasite, and loving one's neighbor." To a friend in 1948 he wrote: "Be more bourgeois as befits a scholar and a gentleman."

AUDEN'S RELIGIOUS conversion in 1939 cannot be separated from his

rejection of leftism, or from the later poetic revisions that went with that rejection. Again, the roots may lie in his seeming counterculturalism. Auden went to Spain in January 1937 to support the loyalist forces outside Valencia, planning to stay until summer. He was back in London by the first week of March.

There is almost no record of Auden's activities in his month-and-a-half in Spain. He never spoke of the trip even to his closest friend, the novelist Christopher Isherwood. It may have been unfair of the pro-Franco South African poet Roy Campbell to say that Auden did nothing in Spain "apart from the violent exercise he got with his knife and fork." But the lacuna has troubled such earlier Auden biographers as Humphrey Carpenter and such critics as Samuel Hynes, and it is the mark of a certain shallowness that Davenport-Hines shows less curiosity.

Whatever happened in Spain, Auden now became aware that his fellow-traveling frivolity had been mere political opportunism, part of the problem of the 1930's rather than part of the solution. "I still believe socialism to be right," he wrote in 1939, "but believe the theory and practice of revolution to be wrong in the sense that I do not believe it will conquer fascism and establish socialism." The young Auden had died with "Spain, 1937," which his literary executor, Edward Mendelson, would call the "greatest poem of the 1930's" but which Auden himself would come to cringe at.

George Orwell, while praising this poem, caustically described the lines beginning:

To-day the deliberate increase
in the chances of death,
The conscious acceptance of
guilt in the necessary
murder . . .
as:

a sort of thumb-nail sketch of a day in the life of a "good party man." In the morning a couple

of political murders, a ten minutes' interlude to stifle "bourgeois" remorse, then a hurried luncheon and a busy afternoon and evening chalking walls and distributing pamphlets. . . . The Hitlers and Stalins find murder necessary, but . . . Mr. Auden's brand of amorality is only possible if you are the kind of person who is always somewhere else when the trigger is pulled.

Auden, too, says Davenport-Hines, "came to regret the final lines."

Not really—he came to repudiate the entire poem, excising it from the *Collected Shorter Poems of 1966*. Why? In 1952, in "The Shield of Achilles," a Christian allegory of totalitarian violence, Auden wrote:

The mass and majesty of this
world, all
That carries weight and
always weighs the same
Lay in the hands of others; they
were small
And could not hope for
help and no help came:
What their foes liked
to do was done, their shame
Was all the worst could wish;
they lost their pride
And died as men before their
bodies died.

Clearly Auden had found Orwell's criticism telling. From "the necessary murder" to this witness to horror is an unbridgeable leap—and one of the two poems would have to go.

It was a horror, moreover, that Auden felt he had done nothing to stop when he embraced the fashionable politics of his Oxford contemporaries. In this same spirit, he also emended his famous poem "September 1, 1939"—

I sit in one of the dives
On Fifty-Second Street
Uncertain and afraid
As the clever hopes expire
Of a low, dishonest decade . . .

—to remove a line he came to consider fatuous and morally self-aggrandizing: "We must love one

another or die." To know that the "dive" on 52nd Street that Auden was visiting on the night of the Nazi invasion of Poland was not a barroom but a gay sex club turns the entire poem on its head, and makes it easier to understand the remorse that led him to emend it. The poem had been the work not of a nepenthe-seeking idealist but of a Neronian who was fiddling while Rome burned.

THIS IS not to say that all of Auden's changes improved his poems. But repudiating some of his early poems was not the act of a befuddled eccentric. His horrified look back may be likened without exaggeration to the experience of being "born again," and indeed Auden's poetic reappraisal had much in common with his conversion to Anglicanism. It was the necessary adjustment of one suddenly overwhelmed by remorse over what, rightly or wrongly, he saw as sinfulness and a vanity too long indulged. It was a gesture, however belated, of penitence.

Not that it did him much good among his peers. At the time of his death in 1973, there was a consensus that he was the greatest living poet in the language. Nonetheless, certain poets of the previous generation (Robert Frost, in particular) had never forgiven him for his vanguard opportunism of the 30's, while younger readers distrusted him as a reactionary. (In 1968, he wrote to an English friend, "Can you understand all this Student Revolt business? . . . I am bewildered.")

Davenport-Hines hopes to take a different tack: "I have never tried to vilify or diminish my subject," he writes. "Indeed I think that to do so is decadent and envious." The result is that his Auden for the 90's seems to be an Auden insulated from criticism—even self-criticism. That is hardly a recommendation for the biography of one whose greatest triumphs arose from moments of ruthless self-appraisal.

MUSIC

Mourning Nancy LaMott

Terry Teachout

“WHAT ONE reads in the newspaper,” said Bismarck, “can also be true.” I thought of that wry remark as I looked at the obituaries for the cabaret singer Nancy LaMott that ran in the New York papers last December. The circumstances of her death made it a newsworthy event, especially in a town with two tabloids: she was married on her bed in a Manhattan hospital, an hour and a half before she died of liver cancer, two weeks short of what would have been her forty-fourth birthday. Yet none of the papers offered a first-hand account of the ceremony, in part because, except for me, no journalists were present, and I wrote nothing about it. It was, I felt, a private matter.

Keeping Nancy’s secrets was nothing new for me; I had been doing it since the day we met. She was, as my wife Liz once said, a blunter: every important thing she ever told me about herself burst out of her without warning, either

as soon as we got together or in the middle of a conversation about something else. As a working journalist, I interviewed her twice, and on both occasions she unthinkingly said things that would have been acutely embarrassing, to her and other people, had they been published.

Aside from those interviews, the only other time I mentioned Nancy in print was in a piece about Frank Sinatra I published last fall in the *New York Times Book Review*, where I called her the finest cabaret singer of her generation; by then, I knew she was sick and feared she was dying, and I wanted her to see those words before it was too late. I was, of course, biased, but thousands of people who had never met Nancy LaMott, or who knew her only slightly, agreed with me. The *Times* critic Stephen Holden, who wrote her obituary for his paper, spoke for them when he said that her “unadorned, heartfelt interpretations of songs epitomized the best of what could be called an all-American style of traditional pop singing.”

Her success was a minor miracle of sorts, proof that virtue is some-

times rewarded, at least for a while. Though American popular music has long since turned its back on the traditions Holden invoked, Nancy’s unabashedly romantic performances of the old-fashioned songs she loved were nonetheless bringing her, after a quarter-century of scuffling, the kind of national exposure no other baby-boom cabaret artist had yet received. When she died, she was on the verge of real fame—not the small-time celebrity of a New York club singer, but something bigger and more far-reaching.

That kind of acclaim would inevitably have changed her life, but nothing could have changed her personality. Short (five-foot-one), bottle-blond, unpretentious, and irrepressibly merry, Nancy was all of a piece, on stage and off. Because she sang without reserve or self-consciousness, her fans felt they knew her, though few of them knew she had spent the whole of her adult life suffering from an incurable intestinal disorder and its various side effects, including arthritis. She did not hide it, but neither did she trade on it, and her courage never failed her, not even

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at the very end, when, having lost her hair to chemotherapy, she faced her audiences wearing a wig, and, having known both, sang of love and despair.

I CANNOT remember exactly when I first heard Nancy sing, or what the occasion was, though I think my curiosity must have been piqued in late 1993 by an issue of *New York* magazine in which the editors of that trend-happy journal dubbed her "the best cabaret singer in New York." Not that the honor would necessarily have impressed me. In the 50's, cabaret was a *recherché* alternative to the mainstream pop of singers like Sinatra and Tony Bennett; by the 90's, four decades after Elvis Presley turned American popular music inside out, it had become a black-tie life-support system for the show tunes of yesteryear. But early or late, it had always been a haven for singers with uninteresting voices and interchangeable styles: arch, overdramatic, brittle around the edges. The infectious brio of a Bobby Short, or the emotional directness of a Mabel Mercer, merely served to make far too many of their colleagues seem pale and gray by contrast. And the cabaret repertoire, with its relentless emphasis on Cole Porter and Stephen Sondheim, seemed to me as suffocatingly narrow as its manner.

Whatever the reason, I found myself one afternoon in an Upper West Side record store, holding a copy of Nancy's second CD, *Come Rain or Come Shine: The Songs of Johnny Mercer*, trying to decide whether or not to buy it. I was intrigued by the uncabaret-like choice of material—"Moon River," "Hit the Road to Dreamland," "The Days of Wine and Roses"—but it was the cover photo that tipped the scales. Though dressed glamorously enough, the woman in the picture seemed on closer inspection anything but glamorous: with her long blonde hair, tightly

shut eyes, and blissful half-smile, she looked like a precocious child playing dress-up on a rainy afternoon. Charmed by the incongruity, I bought the disc, brought it home, and put it on. An hour later, I went back and bought Nancy's two other CD's, *Beautiful Baby* and *My Foolish Heart*, and spent the next few days playing all three of them over and over again.*

What I heard on those discs was a warm, husky mezzo-soprano voice that seemed twice as big as the woman in whom it was housed; a vivid yet unaffected way with lyrics; and a quality at once sensuous and achingly idealistic. Later, after I had met Nancy, I would write that her singing sounded "as if the girl next door had snuck out at two A.M. to make a little whoopee with her steady boyfriend," a description that delighted her no end.

Viewed from one angle, Nancy's albums fit more or less comfortably into a cabaret mold. Though she had a wonderfully sure sense of what jazz musicians call "time" (she swings with impressive ease, for example, on the title track of *Come Rain or Come Shine*), she was not a jazz singer: her vocal routines were carefully worked out in advance, and she never improvised. And though her voice was unexpectedly large, most of her singing was intimate in approach, as befit the modest size of the rooms in which cabaret artists usually appear. (The Oak Room of the Algonquin Hotel, where Nancy performed regularly in the last few years of her life, seats 80.) Her recording of "Surrey with the Fringe on Top," which appears on *Beautiful Baby*, was in this sense a *locus classicus* of her art. The singing is delicate and airy, the reading of Oscar Hammerstein's *faux-naïf* lyrics precisely detailed, and the overall effect strikingly similar in scale and style to classical art-song.

But Nancy's singing contained no trace of the affectation that is

the blight of the cabaret style. It was, rather, firmly rooted in the tradition of such full-voiced, full-hearted women singers of the 50's as Jo Stafford and Rosemary Clooney. Even when she sang Sondheim (*My Foolish Heart* contains a medley of two songs from the musical *Merrily We Roll Along*), she did so with passion and honesty. The blasé disengagement that nowadays passes for irony formed no part of her musical vocabulary: for her, popular singing was serious business.

THAT WINTER, Liz and I went to the Chestnut Room of Tavern on the Green, a restaurant on the western edge of Central Park, to hear Nancy in person. The Chestnut Room, whose lavishly mirrored decor is a bizarre blend of high camp and early-American tourist trap, is the last place one would expect to find a classy singer (though classy singers appear there several times each year), and we wondered how she would fit in. The answer came quickly: she marched onto the bandstand, looked around, and announced, with an enormous grin, "This place looks like a gay hunting lodge." After a split-second pause, the crowd exploded with laughter.

Nancy sang a canny mixture of material from her three albums and various other songs, some familiar and some obscure. Her patter sounded spontaneous, though it was in fact as carefully rehearsed as her singing (I would hear her use the hunting-lodge line a half-dozen times, fracturing the audience every time), and she seemed relaxed and confident. But the

*Nancy LaMott made five albums, all on the Midder Music label: *Beautiful Baby* (MMCD001), *Come Rain or Come Shine* (MMCD002), *My Foolish Heart* (MMCD003), *Just in Time for Christmas* (MMCD004), and *Listen to My Heart* (MMCD005). These albums are available in many large record stores, and can also be ordered directly from Midder Music, 275 West 96th St., Suite 32-G, New York, NY 10025, or by calling (212) 663-3656.

thing that impressed me most was her ability to project herself so fully that you came away feeling you had had a personal encounter. This was what made audiences fall for Nancy. There was nothing either self-indulgent or exploitative about it: her sincerity was real, and it was irresistible.

Were it not for the fact that she also had a beautiful voice which she used with exceptional skill, one might have been tempted to say that Nancy's art was more theatrical than musical: she approached each song as if it were a one-act play, with herself as the main character. The theater critic John Simon, who admired her greatly, wrote of one of her performances that "she fully fathoms what a song is about, and then, rather than merely singing it, lives it." Singers who can do this, be they popular or classical, are the rarest and most precious of birds.

ONE EVENING in the spring of 1994, representing the features section of the *Daily News*, I showed up for an interview with Nancy at an inexpensive restaurant in the theater district of New York, wondering what I had let myself in for. Singers are notoriously temperamental as a breed, and even for experienced reporters, interviews are almost always awkward: both parties bring unrelated agendas to the table, and mutual manipulation is often the order of the day. I was prepared to be disappointed.

Nancy was already there when I arrived, and I was struck by her pleasant, plain-spoken manner. We ordered dinner, she with a gusto unexpected in so petite a woman. (I would learn soon enough that she loved food almost as much as music.) After an ice-breaking fiasco with the miniature tape recorder I had purchased for the occasion, I pulled out a notebook and started asking questions about her early days.

She came from a medium-sized town in Michigan. Her father had

been a part-time trumpeter, and she had gotten her start with his band. "My family visited New York when I was twelve," she said, "and I was already the kind of kid who read Earl Wilson's column and wanted to go to Sardi's and a Broadway show." Laughing, I confessed that I, too, had read Wilson's Broadway column as a child in Missouri. Indeed, the longer we talked, the more we found we had in common: both of us had cut our teeth on jazz, longed to see the lights of Broadway, and traveled to New York to seek our fortunes.

What started off as an interview imperceptibly became a conversation. She spoke frankly of her struggle with Crohn's disease, of the ileostomy she had undergone the year before in order to relieve the condition, of the hard times she had known and the hopes she had. After dinner, I walked her to the Lunt-Fontanne Theater, where she was singing anonymously in the pit of an ill-fated musical called *The Best Little Whorehouse Goes Public*, a thankless chore she had taken on in order to pay her medical bills. She was so tiny that I had to stoop to hear her over the roar of traffic in Times Square.

Once the interview was published, I sent Nancy a copy of a book I had written about growing up in the Midwest. She called a few days later to tell me she had liked both book and interview, and I invited her to the ballet. It took a month to find a night on which we were both free, but we finally settled on George Balanchine's dance version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which she had never seen. Afterward we ate at O'Neal's, a dancers' haunt across the street from Lincoln Center, and talked until closing time. I mentioned at one point that my favorite popular song was Leonard Bernstein's "Some Other Time," and sitting there in the near-empty restaurant, she sang it for me: *Where has the time all gone to?/Haven't done half*

the things we want to/Oh, well, we'll catch up/Some other time.

We felt from the first as though we had known each other for years. After her funeral, Nancy's brother would ask me how long we had been friends. Seventeen months, I told him, and he shook his head. "From the way she talked," he said, "I figured you guys went *way* back."

LIZ AND I started going to hear Nancy whenever she sang in New York, sometimes at Tavern on the Green and sometimes at the Oak Room; I continued taking her to the ballet occasionally, and the three of us had dinner together whenever we could find the time. But like most friendships between busy people, ours was conducted more often than not over the telephone. Nancy's messages all began the same way: "Hi, LaMottski here." Then she would talk until the answering machine cut her off. When I called back, we would chat for an hour or so.

Many of our conversations were about music. Nancy had thought hard about her art, and had the clearest possible understanding of what worked for her as a singer. It had little to do with received ideas about cabaret: she preferred wistfulness to rue, and hope to high tragedy. "I'm a major-chord singer," she liked to say, and certainly she was the only cabaret singer in New York, if not the world, who preferred Rodgers and Hammerstein to Rodgers and Hart. Her repertoire ranged from Irving Berlin to the soft-rock balladeer James Taylor, with plenty of room in between for new songs by younger writers. But she also had a special liking for certain moss-covered standards thought to be dead beyond recall. "I try to take songs that everybody gave up on, and rethink them," she once said:

I find a point of view that works for me and sing them in

a way that makes people love them. Take a song like "Moon River." Sure, it's a really good song, but you know what people think about it: "Who wants to hear *that* again?" And that's when I start to get interested. I love it when people come up to me and say, "I really hated that song until I heard you sing it."

Nancy knew how good she was, and was not shy about saying so. Neither of us had much use for the "classic" cabaret style, and while she was quick to praise other women singers she liked—she was unstinting, for example, in her admiration of Weslia Whitfield, a jazz-inclined cabaret singer from San Francisco—these were few and far between. Liz and I laughed at what we called her "thou-shalt-have-no-other-gods-before-me" moods, but we never teased her about them. Success was important to her: she had started out as a chubby, awkward teenager with a promising but raw style, and by sheer force of will had turned herself into a beauty whose taste and musicality were respected by every professional who ever heard her. "I've sung a lot of Holiday Inns," she once told me. "Anything I get, I deserve."

NANCY'S TOUGHNESS was born of a life filled with suffering, both physical and emotional. Illness had kept her from working regularly—there were long stretches when she could not perform at all—and now that surgery had made it possible for her to take a serious crack at the big time, she was determined to reach the top. She had also been unlucky, repeatedly, in love (though, characteristically, two of her broken engagements ended in friendships so strong and enduring that both ex-fiancés would be present at her marriage, jointly serving as best men). All this was spun off into her singing, which grew steadily deeper and more intense, even during the brief time I knew her.

But there was more to Nancy than her art. Perhaps because there had been so much pain in her own life, she had a genius for friendship: a booklet given out at her memorial service contained letters of remembrance from more than 70 people, all of whom were plainly devastated by her death. No doubt for the same reason, she was an easy touch for charity, though she made light of her frequent appearances at fund-raising events.

People who knew Nancy longer and better than I swore she could be lazy, demanding, and willful (though never, so far as I know, malicious—there was no spite in her). But these were mere surface flaws, not outward marks of a divided soul—a condition which affects some artists so profoundly it becomes impossible for the people who know them to reconcile who they are with what they do. With Nancy, there was no difference, and that was part of the reason why listeners responded so strongly to her singing. For all the sophistication of her art, she was a small-town girl at heart, kind and generous and uncomplicated, and she knew how to be happy.

IN MARCH 1995, Liz and I went to hear Nancy sing at Tavern on the Green. It was a mid-week performance, and she had made us promise to catch the last set and then join her as she ate her free dinner (one of the coveted prerogatives of a singer who performs in a club with a good chef). We saw as soon as she mounted the bandstand that something was wrong. When the set ended, she came straight to our table, sat down, and blurted, "Hi, guys, I have cancer."

Over the next nine months, she underwent hormone therapy, a hysterectomy, and a grueling course of chemotherapy. But she also planned, rehearsed, and recorded her last and most ambitious album, *Listen to My Heart*; made her debut

at Carnegie Hall; sang at the Algonquin and, again, at Tavern on the Green; and met the man whom, when her time was up at last, she chose to marry.

Peter Zapp was an actor Nancy had met while singing in San Francisco. When she told me about him on the phone, she added that she had also seen him perform on stage, but was untypically reluctant to supply further details. I pressed her: what show? what part? She paused, probably for effect. "Well," she finally said, before giggling, "he was playing Roy Cohn in *Angels in America*."

Nancy had gotten lucky, and just in time. Pete soon came to New York to care for her after the hysterectomy, but the cancer, it turned out, had metastasized. She canceled her engagements for the rest of the year, except for a week-long run in October at Tavern on the Green. By then, the disease had reached her liver, her hair had fallen out, and her weight was down to 104. Somehow she got through the week, and gave a radiant closing-night performance, during which she did, surprisingly, a Rodgers and Hart song. Many in the audience were close friends and knew what she was singing about: *I didn't know what year it was/Life was no prize/I wanted love and here it was/Shining out of your eyes/I'm wise, and I know what time it is now*.

A week or so later, she called up and asked us to come over for Thanksgiving dinner, as we had the year before. "You know," she said cheerfully, "I've been wanting to show Pete a positive role model for marriage. And I realized—you guys are about the only straight married couple I know." But when she opened the door to her apartment, she looked shrunken and weak. Then Pete appeared. In a crazily romantic gesture, he had shaved his own head. And frail as Nancy was, she pulled herself together sufficiently to cook dinner while we heard *Listen to My Heart*, a first copy of which had arrived a few days earlier.

Listen to My Heart is a collection of Nancy's most frequently requested numbers, including a show-stopping pairing of the Johnny Mercer-Harold Arlen ballad "Out of This World" and Cole Porter's "So in Love" (the only Porter song I ever heard her sing). It was her first album with a large studio orchestra, and she had had the good fortune to work with Peter Matz, a veteran arranger from Los Angeles. I had watched her record the vocal tracks in the studio in July, but this was my first hearing of the finished product. It was clear that if this was to be her final album, her career would be ending on its highest note.

NANCY SANG in public for the last time on December 4, at a party celebrating the anniversary of the opening of WQEW, the all-standards radio station in New York whose disc jockeys had done much to promote her career. When I called her the following Saturday, she was still groggy from chemotherapy, so I merely asked if there was anything she needed. "Not today," she said, "but maybe I'm going to need something from you early next week."

Three nights later, I learned that she was back in the hospital. Her liver had been eaten away by the cancer, and her kidneys had shut down. There was no hope.

In her room the next day I held

her hand, startled by how warm it was, and told her I loved her. It was all she could do to draw breath. When I came back that evening, a handful of her closest friends and relatives had gathered in the corridor, telling stories and pretending to be calm. Then a doctor arrived, to say the only way to make her comfortable was to give her a dose of morphine that might send her into a coma. Pete thought it right that she decide for herself, so he shouted in her ear until she clawed her way back from the edge of oblivion. Pete had proposed the day before, and now she told him that she wanted the morphine but that she wanted to marry him first.

The rest I remember only in flashes, ending with the arrival of a priest and the hurried exchange of vows. For weeks afterward, I would close my eyes and see Nancy lying in her death and marriage bed, gasping for air through the blackened scab that was her mouth, visibly exalted by the ceremony, shouting "Yes, yes, yes!" to the priest. Only a handful of days had passed since I had last seen her, bald and thin but recognizably herself; now she was already resident in another kingdom, yet somewhere deep within there still lay the power to receive this ultimate sacrament of life and love.

Nancy died that night, with Pete at her side. Two months lat-

er, a memorial service was held at the Church of St. Paul the Apostle in Manhattan, and people lined up halfway around the block to say farewell. The *New York Times* had published a long story about her in January, accompanied by a snapshot Liz had taken on Thanksgiving of her sitting on a couch with Pete, the two of them bald as a pair of peaches, smiling happily; a few weeks later, *People* ran an enthusiastic review of *Listen to My Heart*. Sales of all five of her albums soared, and David Friedman and Scott Barnes, her producer and manager, announced that they had enough high-quality performance tapes and unused studio material for five more. At long last, she was a star.

"LIVE ALL you can," Henry James wrote toward the end of his own long life, "it's a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular, so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that what *have* you had?" Unlike James, Nancy LaMott had only half a life, but she lived all she could, and with even greater passion as she knew it was drawing to a close. She was that most uncommon of artists, one whose life was worthy of her work. I listen to her records often, and whenever I do I think of her goodness and bravery, which ennobled every note she sang, and miss her more than I can say.

Books in Review

First Things and Last

The Quest for God:
A Personal Pilgrimage
by Paul Johnson

HarperCollins. 288 pp. \$24.00

Reviewed by
Norman Podhoretz

ABOUT TWO years ago, Paul Johnson told me that he was thinking of interrupting work on his massive history of the United States to write a "little book" about God. Coming from anyone else, a tidbit like this would have to be taken with a grain of salt, or perhaps as a joke. But knowing Johnson, I could only shake my head in wonder, as I had done many times before in contemplating the achievements of this extraordinary English writer who has managed to produce more articles than he can probably count and more than twenty books covering a very wide range of fields

NORMAN PODHORETZ, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, was the editor-in-chief of *COMMENTARY* for 35 years and is now its editor-at-large.

with unflagging ease, lucidity, authority, and panache.

Included in this huge output, so much more Victorian than contemporary in its profusion, are mammoth histories of the English people, of Christianity, of the Jews, and of the modern era, biographies of two popes, and a study of ancient Palestine, not to mention *Castles of England, Scotland, and Wales* and *Cathedrals of England, Scotland, and Wales*. Before long there will also be that history of the United States to which I assume he has returned now that he has completed his brief detour to first things and last.

The Quest for God is shorter and more informal than most of Johnson's other books. In fact, in tone and approach it bears a closer resemblance to the personal essays he turns out every week for the *Spectator* in London. Discussing prayer, for example, he launches into a defense of the use he and his fellow Roman Catholics make of graven images, and this leads to a description of the "holy objects" he keeps in his study. One of them is

a large 18th-century crucifix, finely carved in wood and paint-

ed, which once stood on the refectory wall of a Spanish convent of nuns. It was looted in the Spanish Civil War and found its way to England, and I bought it some years ago for a modest price in London. It is immensely realistic as to Christ's sufferings: some would say gruesome. But that is the Spanish manner and I think it right to be reminded forcibly of the sufferings Christ underwent for our sakes. So I was very pleased to buy it and originally intended to hang it in the hall of our London house, to gratify Catholic visitors, and administer a salutary shock to Protestant ones and agnostics. But this my wife Marigold would not allow, for all kinds of reasons, including the conclusive one that "it would frighten the grandchildren." So now it hangs in my study instead, and I see that my wife was perfectly correct. This is the right place for it. I kiss Our Lord's poor feet, nailed to the cross and bleeding, before I begin my work each day, thus acknowledging the debt we owe him, and I can do so in the privacy of my study without arous-

ing derision or scandal. As for the grandchildren, they are occasionally allowed in to glimpse it, and find the experience enjoyable, if not exactly elevating.

This passage—chatty, anecdotal, and spiced with autobiographical detail, both solemn and humorous—is entirely characteristic of *The Quest for God*: not for nothing is the book subtitled “A Personal Pilgrimage.” But by itself the passage is a bit misleading, since *The Quest for God* also resembles Johnson’s bigger books in being based on prodigious learning lightly carried and in the apparent effortless-ness with which it elucidates topics of great difficulty and complexity. Indeed, the topics here are of greater difficulty and complexity than any he has tackled before. In a piece in the *Spectator*, he has summarized the ground he covers in *The Quest for God* as follows:

... who God is, why He created the universe, how He runs it—if He does run it—and why He permits evil to flourish. I discuss animals and their possible souls and the earth and its future, the chances of life on other worlds and how this would affect the notion of our God. I deal with the Four Last Things: death, judgment, hell, and heaven, and, finally, with prayer, the most important subject of all, because it is our way of communicating with this mysterious Being.

Inescapably, then, this is a work of theology. It is, however, theology grounded not in abstract concepts but—as the passage about the crucifix in his study so vividly demonstrates—in the concrete experience and the personal faith of a single devout individual. Although Johnson lovingly and joyfully accepts the dogmas of the Catholic church and revels in its traditions and liturgy, he spends a great deal of time telling us how he thinks and feels (even to the point of including an appendix of prayers he himself has composed) and rela-

tively little about what the Church has to say.

To be sure, what he thinks and feels is consistent, at least so far as I am able to judge, with Catholic doctrine (for which, by the way, he shows himself to be a brilliant and persuasive apologist on the few occasions when he feels called upon to play that role). He believes with perfect faith in a just and all-powerful God Who created the universe out of love and concerns Himself at every minute with everything in it, down to the tiniest detail. He is absolutely convinced that God listens to our prayers, whether He chooses to respond or not. He entertains a theory or two about why God permits evil to exist, but he admits that they do not satisfy him, and he finally accepts the view (most powerfully expressed in the book of Job) that we are simply incapable of understanding God’s purposes. He trusts, however, that in the end all

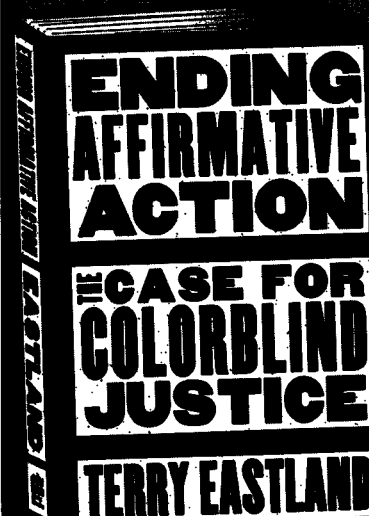
will become clear, for there is a heaven where those who suffer innocently here on earth will be fully and amply recompensed, and there is a hell where the wicked will be punished with unimaginable torments which he nevertheless does a reasonably good job (with the help of Milton, Dante, Michelangelo, Bosch, and others) of imagining.

Consistent though all this is with orthodox Catholic doctrine, *The Quest for God* is not addressed only or even primarily to Catholics. He wrote it, Johnson tells us, to straighten out his own beliefs and in the hope that by doing so, he would help others—including Protestants, Jews, agnostics, and atheists—to straighten out theirs about “the questions which matter more than any others.” On something like this, every individual must speak for himself, but so far as I am concerned, Johnson has succeeded in his main objective.

Thus, looking at “the questions

There is no such thing as “good” discrimination.

In this hard-hitting critique of affirmative action programs and policies in higher education, in the workplace, and in the granting of government contracts, Terry Eastland exposes the insidious effects of racial preferences and “diversity” goals on American



which matter more than any others" through the virginal eyes Johnson mysteriously manages to fix on them, I was repeatedly stimulated and sometimes provoked into asking what in my heart of hearts I really and truly think and believe. I was never put off by the terms in which this pious Catholic speaks: they are for the most part so ecumenically broad and basic that I as a Jew (though not remotely so observant a one as he is a Catholic) could enter into them with no difficulty at all. Nor, conversely, was I deterred by Johnson's evocation of the particularities of his religious faith and experience, vastly different though they are from mine.

A good example is his conviction that God concerns Himself with "the minutest details" of all His creatures, up to and including "every single member of a swarm of locusts— . . . however many billions of them there may be," and that "He is conscious of each flower, each leaf, and each blade of grass." This reading of God's omniscience, which Johnson ascribes to most Christian and Jewish theologians throughout the ages, seems a bit extreme to me. Still, if an omnipotent and omniscient and loving God exists, Johnson's eloquent defense of the idea that nothing is too trivial for Him to take an interest in makes better sense intellectually than the alternative concepts of God as a remote First Cause who sets the world into motion and then leaves it to its own devices, or as "a busy Chief Executive Officer of the Universe, who cannot be bothered with this or that."

But then again, when Johnson with breathtaking boldness and great literalness applies the idea to himself, I cannot help shying away:

There is an old legal saying, "*De minimis non curat lex*"—the law does not concern itself with trivial matters. Many assume this applies equally, or even *a fortiori*, to God. My wife Mari-

gold takes this view. When I explain to her that I am worried about what God may think about an article I am writing, . . . she exclaims in exasperation, "God has better things to do than worry about that!"

Once again, Marigold is there to throw a dash of cold water on one of Johnson's enthusiasms, and on this point I am all with her. Yet how I envy Johnson the depth and intensity of his faith, and how I wish I could believe that God cares one way or the other about the things I write, even when (unlike in the present instance) they have nothing directly to do with Him. Perhaps if I did believe this, and perhaps if I also performed an appropriate Jewish ritual before sitting down to work, my writing would flow with the same steady rush and fecundity as Johnson's always seems to do. These, at any rate, are the kinds of thoughts *The Quest for God* has provoked in me personally and will, I feel sure, provoke in many others.

BUT THERE is also an impersonal dimension to this book which gives it still greater force. Before launching into his main theme, Johnson devotes several chapters to arguing that the "death of God," announced at the end of the 19th century so confidently by Nietzsche and so fearfully by Dostoevsky, turned out to be the great non-event of the 20th. "Somehow," he writes,

God survived, flourished even. At the end of the 20th century, the idea of a personal, living God is as lively and real as ever, in the minds and hearts of countless millions of men and women throughout our planet.

In accounting for this unexpected development, Johnson points out that science has in some respects ceased being the enemy of religion and become its friend; that the horrors of the 20th century "were instrumental in turning men

and women toward God rather than against Him"; and that the substitutes for God to which millions of other people resorted (Communism, Nazism, Freudianism, humanism) either bred limitless evil or failed to satisfy the ineradicable human need for meaning and solace. The upshot is that almost everyone now recognizes there is no substitute for God, and while many nevertheless remain agnostic or unable to believe, the number of "those prepared to declare, flatly, that there is no God" has become smaller than ever.

Given all this, Johnson concludes that we are on the threshold of a great religious revival. He is by no means alone in this expectation, but whereas others look forward to a new Great Awakening with a certain apprehension (even those, like myself, who would on the whole welcome it), Johnson sees it as a great and unmixed good. And so indeed it could be—if, that is, it were to usher in an age marked by the kind of faith Johnson himself is blessed with and that shines through every word of this amazing book. It is an unlikely possibility, but one worth praying for, if anything ever was.

The Fringe

A Force Upon the Plain:
The American Militia
Movement and the
Politics of Hate
by Kenneth S. Stern

Simon & Schuster. 303 pp. \$24.00

Reviewed by
Matthew Rees

ON THE morning of April 19, 1995, a powerful bomb was detonated next to the Murrah fed-

MATTHEW REES, a new contributor, is a staff writer at the Weekly Standard and the author of *From the Deck to the Sea: Blacks and the Republican Party* (Longwood Academic Press).

eral building in Oklahoma City, taking the lives of 168 people including nineteen children. In the immediate aftermath of the blast, as hundreds of FBI agents and investigators were still converging on the scene, a number of political commentators expressed fears that international terrorists had once again, two years after the World Trade Center bombing, succeeded in striking a deadly blow at the United States.

Several days later, however, the authorities stumbled upon Timothy McVeigh, sitting in jail in Perry, Oklahoma for driving a vehicle without a license plate. Far from being a member of an international conspiracy, the chief suspect in this horrific crime turned out to be an ex-Marine from a small town near Buffalo, New York, a homegrown fanatic, born and bred in the heartland. No sooner was this shocking fact released than analysts and politicians alike began to pose a new set of theories. The Oklahoma terrorists, it was now argued, were part of a rising tide of right-wing extremism sweeping the country, a tide that received its energy from the successes of conservatism over the previous two decades and that had reached a crest, just five months before the blast, in the November 1994 congressional elections.

Thus, according to Jonathan Alter, a senior editor of *Newsweek*, "the bombers took mainstream conservative ideas . . . and made them extreme-right views." To Lewis H. Lapham, the editor of *Harper's*, "it was conceivable that he [McVeigh] had read some of the material circulated by the Christian Coalition." Robert Wright, a senior editor of the *New Republic*, opined that if elements of the "militia milieu" had drafted the Republican Contract With America, it "would look in many ways as it now looks, if with rather more oomph." In the judgment of Michael Kramer, chief political correspondent of *Time*, Newt Gingrich

and right-wing talk-radio hosts were to blame: "The gulf between hyperbolic words and last week's despicable treachery is not all that great." Even President Clinton joined in the chorus:

We hear so many loud and angry voices in America today whose sole goal seems to be to try to keep some people as paranoid as possible and the rest of us all torn up and upset with each other. They spread hate, they leave the impression, by their very words, that violence is acceptable.

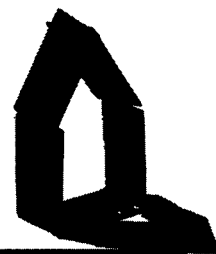
A YEAR has now passed since the bombing. Timothy McVeigh and one of his accomplices, Terry Nichols, are on trial. Others may still be at large. With more information about the various groupings that compose the radical Right fringe, we are in a better position to make some knowledgeable judgments about its nature.

In *A Force Upon the Plain*, Kenneth S. Stern, a researcher at the American Jewish Committee, points to several factors underlying the heightened visibility of the extreme Right. One such factor is the end of the cold war; energies once devoted by right-wing extremists to mobilizing sentiment against worldwide Communism are now, writes Stern, being directed elsewhere—and primarily against the U.S. federal government. But the government has in fact contributed to the fears of these groups, and even fueled them. The FBI's botched assault against the white separatist Randy Weaver and his family at Ruby Ridge, Idaho in August 1992; the 1993 siege and destruction of the compound housing David Koresh's Branch Davidian sect by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; and the passage in the same year of the Brady gun-control bill are all cited by Stern as landmarks in the growth of violent anti-government sentiment on the far Right.

An unstint-
at the cul-
middle-class
entlements
implicat-
for the 21st
century...

The Return of Thrift

HOW THE COLLAPSE OF THE
MIDDLE CLASS WELFARE STATE WILL
REAWAKEN VALUES IN AMERICA



Phillip Longman

Return of Thrift points
back to civil society
our nation was found-
which we must re-
to retain our presen-
in world order.

—SENATOR BILL BRADLEY

the debate on bal-
federal budget appear-
ment." —Kirkus

Return of Thrift treat-
icated and much-lim-
subject with complex-
and clarity...it is a
about America's future.

—NICHOLAS LEE
The Atlantic

THE FREE PRESS
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As for who is drawn to these movements, one Montana-based observer interviewed by Stern invokes the image of a funnel "moving through space":

At the front end, it's picking up lots and lots of people by hitting on issues that have wide appeal, like gun control and environmental restrictions, which enrage many people here out West. Then you go a little bit further into the funnel, and it's about ideology, about the oppressiveness of the federal government. Then, further in, you get into the belief systems. The conspiracy. The Illuminati. The Freemasons. Then, it's about the anti-Semitic conspiracy. Finally, at the narrowest end of the funnel, you've drawn in the hard core, where you get someone like Tim McVeigh popping out.

In chapter after chapter tracing these strands, Stern draws a picture of the various conspiratorial groups ranging from the Aryan Nations to the Militia of Montana to the Posse Comitatus, each exploiting hot-button issues to expand its ranks.

ALL THIS sounds like a potent, and scary, brew. Nevertheless, the evidence gathered by Stern and other researchers suggests that, in terms of both numbers and political appeal, the extremist movements are nowhere near so strong as we have been led to imagine.

Because groupings on the far Right tend to be secretive, obtaining estimates of membership figures is a problematic endeavor. "When you're at war, you don't give the enemy the number of your troops," a John Birch Society official said in an interview last October, and his organization is less surreptitious than most. But an advantage of secrecy is that it can mask low membership rolls. According to one monitoring group, the Center for Democratic Renewal, total militia membership lies in the range of 50,000 to

100,000. These figures may well be on the high end of the scale, however. A June 1995 report from the Anti-Defamation League offers a national total of 15,000 militia members spread across 40 states.

In the political arena, moreover, the fringe Right on its own is decidedly weak. In 1988, the white supremacist David Duke, running for the presidency on the neo-Nazi Populist party slate, received all of 150,000 votes out of a total of 90 million ballots cast nationwide. Four years later, Bo Gritz, a chief organizer of the various militia movements, sought the presidency on the same line and garnered fewer than 100,000 votes—approximately one-tenth of 1 percent of the total number of ballots cast. At the state level, Duke, who managed to win a seat in the Louisiana state legislature in 1989, failed in his bid for the governorship in 1991 against a scandal-tarred incumbent in a state mired in economic distress. Duke is now running for the U.S. Senate in Louisiana but is far more likely to attract a nice dollop of publicity than a winning share of votes.

FINALLY, IT is simply not the case that the radical Right is part of a continuum that merges seamlessly into the broader fabric of American conservatism. On this point, Stern goes only so far as to suggest that Republican victories in 1994 "brought with them people who were able to stake out the fringes of their party" and that "when the center shifts, the margins move, too."

While that may be true, the evidence Stern presents also makes it clear that militia leaders and others on the fringe Right, when they are not raving about federal agents descending from black helicopters and "concentration camps" run by the Internal Revenue Service, are often as likely to direct their rhetorical fire at mainstream Republicans and conservatives as at Democrats. Bo Gritz, for exam-

ple, once warned of a "satanic" and "Zionist" plot designed to turn the United States "into USA, Incorporated, with King George [President Bush] as chairman of the board"; Newt Gingrich is known in militia circles as "Newt World Order Gingrich"; and Rush Limbaugh is seen as part of the "liberal establishment," a traitor to the cause who, in the words of John Schloser, the commander of the Colorado Free Militia, is "a Judas Priest."

To be sure, there is today one prominent politician, Patrick J. Buchanan, who has planted one foot in the conservative movement and edged the other into the extreme Right camp. Though Buchanan no longer serves up the blatantly anti-Semitic fare of four and five years ago, he has also never repudiated his earlier statements; in the meantime, his nativism and his denunciations of the "new world order," among other themes touched upon in his fiery speeches, have been enough to attract elements of the far Right into the organizational ranks of his presidential campaign (not to mention discombobulating many otherwise sensible conservatives).

It is instructive, however, that throughout the primary season Buchanan's ties to the far Right were regularly cited by other Republicans as among the factors rendering him unfit for public office, and that Buchanan, to stay afloat politically, had to distance himself from the radicals around him. Indeed, it could be said that Republicans have on the whole been more vigilant about these matters than Democrats. As Eric Breindel pointed out in the *New York Post*, mainstream conservative disapprobation of Buchanan, both for his statements and for his associations, made a strange contrast with the spectacle of President Clinton's attendance at the swearing-in ceremony of former U.S. Congressman Kweisi Mfume as president of the NAACP in Febru-

ary; Mfume, as head of the congressional black caucus, had entered into a "sacred covenant" with the racist Louis Farrakhan and his Nation of Islam, and has yet to renounce this association. The double standard on extremism is still, it seems, very much alive.

MORE THAN 40 years ago, the historian Richard Hofstadter characterized extremist right-wing movements as a phenomenon distinctive to our country's history, a reflection of "the rootlessness and heterogeneity of American life, and above all, of its peculiar scramble for status and its peculiar search for secure identity."^{*} The anxieties feeding fringe movements today have changed little since Hofstadter wrote. Notwithstanding the handful of radicals who surfaced in (and were then discharged from) the apparatus of the Buchanan campaign, an argument could be made that these groups are, if anything, more marginal than at any point in this century.

After all, as Stern reminds us, the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920's enjoyed a membership that may have numbered in the millions, and its influence could be detected on Capitol Hill in the passage of restrictive immigration laws. Today, the Klan is a shadow of itself. Membership declined to approximately 42,000 by 1965, and has fallen steadily since then to under 6,000. No other group has come close to stepping into the Klan's place, though many smaller ones are on the scene. Indeed, the very marginality of these grouplets may help explain the descent into violence of the kind we saw in Oklahoma City a year ago.

Hofstadter himself was not unduly alarmed about the political prospects of the fringe Right. "I do not share," he wrote, "the widespread foreboding among liberals that this form of dissent will grow

until it overwhelms our liberties altogether and plunges us into a totalitarian nightmare." Today, types like Timothy McVeigh and militia members drilling with heavy weaponry in armed bands in the woods deserve (as Stern urges) the closest possible scrutiny by law-enforcement authorities. But much of the handwringing about the influence of the radical Right on contemporary conservatism smacks, itself, of demagoguery, being a little too complacent to be wholly sincere, and constituting yet further evidence that a paranoid streak is hardly limited to one quadrant of American politics.

Ultimate Answers

Think a Second Time

by Dennis Prager

Regan Books. 255 pp. \$24.00

Reviewed by

Jay P. Lefkowitz

DENNIS PRAGER is the host of a leading radio talk show that originates in California. He also publishes *Ultimate Issues*, a quarterly journal; teaches courses in the Bible; and is the co-author (with Joseph Telushkin) of a popular introductory text, *Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism*. In this collection of 43 *pensées*, many drawn from longer essays in *Ultimate Issues*, Prager addresses the great questions of the day—among them race relations, capital punishment, abortion, pacifism, and religious extremism. He not only tells us what he thinks about them, but buttresses his thoughts with arguments and examples drawn from the great traditions of moral philosophy, Judaism in particular.

JAY P. LEFKOWITZ, whose articles and reviews have appeared in *COMMENTARY* and elsewhere, practices law in Washington, D.C.

He is not one to mince words. Capital punishment, he argues, is a moral imperative, being both just and compassionate. Single women should not bear children—it is selfish to conceive a child without a father. Contrary to current practice, social workers should encourage rather than discourage interracial adoption. An unmoderated pacifism is immoral, for it involves acquiescence in evil. Whatever the revisers of biblical language may say, we must go on depicting God as a father; young men, the primary perpetrators of criminal behavior, need to be reminded of the father's civilizing role.

THESE AND other positions grow out of Prager's belief that moral values emanate from the one God, Whose central demand is that people act decently toward one another. A religiously observant Jew, he identifies the primary mandate of his faith as ethical monotheism ("the only 'ism' I care about"). To illustrate what he means by this, he cites the response of Hillel, the great rabbi of the talmudic era, to the pagan who asked to be taught all of Judaism while standing on one leg: "What is hateful to you, do not do unto others; the rest is commentary."

One central lesson Prager derives from this golden rule is that actions and their results, particularly as they affect others, are much more important than personal feelings, or even motives. Perhaps his strongest indictment of contemporary American society is that we tend to embrace abstract notions like love, compassion, and self-esteem while neglecting self-discipline and ethical *behavior*. Worse, we rush to espouse any philosophy that will exempt us from moral responsibility for our own actions. The great "Lie of the Left," Prager writes, is the claim that people "do bad things because of outside forces, especially economic ones"—in an extreme formulation, that "poverty causes crime." This,

^{*}"The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt," in *The Radical Right*, edited by Daniel Bell (1964).

in his judgment, is exactly backward: rich or poor, people do bad things because they have bad values, and lack self-control.

When they do bad things, moreover, they should be punished. To Prager, one's attitude toward punishment in general, and toward the death penalty for murder in particular, offers a Rorschach test of one's commitment to ethical monotheism. He rehearses the various arguments against capital punishment—innocent people may be executed; it does not accomplish anything because the victims cannot be brought back to life; it is a form of state murder, mere societal revenge; blacks are affected by it disproportionately; other societies manage nicely without it—and answers them one by one.

First, he contends, "far more innocent people will be murdered if there is no death penalty than if there is." Next, the death penalty *does* have deterrent value, even if that value is hard to measure; and while it is true that the victims cannot be revived, executing the guilty goes far toward alleviating the anguish of their loved ones. Quoting William F. Buckley, Jr., Prager observes that if capital punishment is state murder, imprisonment, by the same logic, is state kidnapping; besides, society *should* take just "revenge" against those who flout its most basic mandate. Black murderers, as it happens, are not executed in disproportionate numbers, as definitive studies have lately shown. Finally, Western societies that do without capital punishment should count themselves lucky—perhaps they can afford the luxury; America, alas, cannot.

IN CASE there is any doubt about where all this puts Prager politically, he spells it out by aligning himself in this book with what he calls classical liberalism. This tradition, he asserts, is a complement to the dictates of ethical monotheism. But he distinguishes sharply be-

tween classical liberalism and the contemporary variety, whose doctrines and policies he deems "in large part" responsible for the problems of widespread welfare dependency, the increase in out-of-wedlock births, the erosion of public-school standards, and the Balkanization of society along racial and ethnic lines.

Since the late 1960's, Prager writes mordantly, "liberalism has become identified with positions that were always regarded as Left or even radical, but not liberal, and sometimes not even moral." Nowhere is this discrepancy more salient than with regard to race:

The liberalism I learned held that the skin color of a person is no more important than his or her eye color; that the American ideal is integration, and that liberals must oppose segregation, yet today liberalism supports racial quotas, race-norming (grading an exam differently for members of different races), and segregating students in college dorms by race and ethnicity.

In holding that racial identity matters more than individual behavior—color more than character—today's liberalism is the very antithesis of ethical monotheism. Indeed, the racial philosophy of the contemporary Left, Prager notes, ironically echoes what was once the great "Lie of the Right": the one which "enabled the Nazis to view 'Aryans,' no matter what their behavior, as inherently superior, and Jews, no matter what their behavior, as innately 'sub-human.'"

The disastrous turn taken by contemporary liberalism is especially painful to Prager as a practicing Jew, and as one whose central philosophy grows out of Judaism itself. The United States, he asserts, is "facing a struggle for its soul" between, broadly speaking, the values of a secular-liberalism and the values of a religion-based or religion-tinged conser-

vatism. In that struggle, sadly, American Jews have generally allied themselves not with the moral imperatives of traditional Judaism but with the dominant secular-liberal culture. As one egregious example, Prager mentions the growing tendency in some denominations to condone or even to sanctify homosexual marriage, in flagrant contravention of Jewish religious law and teaching. But there are many other areas as well in which American Jews, by turning their backs on their own tradition, have also "too often taken positions that hurt America."

Think a Second Time is a consistently engaging book. This is not to say that Prager's analysis is immune to criticism. He takes no account, for example, of ethical systems that are not monotheistic; yet millions of Buddhists, Hindus, and Confucians live by moral codes that are presumably compatible both with the dictates of their (multiple) divinities and with Prager's notions of human decency. Nor does he grapple sufficiently with the occasional tensions between monotheistic theologies and the ethics he espouses. After all, in ordering a death sentence for Salman Rushdie, the Ayatollah Khomeini was only carrying out the Quranic command to take the life of the blasphemer; to dismiss Khomeini with the observation that "like all religions, . . . Islam contains xenophobic elements and doctrines that are incompatible with ethical monotheism" is rather to beg the question than to answer it. Finally, the book necessarily suffers the defects of its virtues: while the short-essay form allows Prager to be pungent and succinct, it does not encourage the sorts of discriminations from which discussion of these topics could sometimes benefit.

Notwithstanding these minor quibbles, *Think a Second Time* is a success. Prager not only writes fluently, he brings a cogent mind and

a humane sensibility to bear on whatever he surveys. Most importantly, he has eminently satisfied the goal he set for himself in writing this book: to make his readers rethink their fundamental positions on the most profound issues our society now faces.

Moral Biography

Founding Father:
Rediscovering George
Washington

by Richard Brookhiser

Free Press. 230 pp. \$25.00

Reviewed by
Gary Rosen

FOR MUCH of our country's history, George Washington was treated as something of a demigod. Early biographers like Parson Weems and Chief Justice John Marshall, however different their styles and scholarly standards, wrote in a spirit of patriotic reverence and described a man seemingly without flaw. Today, by contrast, few Americans would mistake Washington for a divinity. Revisionist historians have given us a figure who is all too human—a greedy land speculator, a mediocre general, a suggestible politician.

But flagging respect for our first President has a deeper cause than revisionism. As Richard Brookhiser, a senior editor at *National Review*, argues in *Founding Father*, the trouble is that we now tend to take American nationhood for granted, seeing it as an inevitable step in the march of this or that historical trend—democracy or imperialism, Enlightenment or patriarchy. Along the way, we have lost sight of the fact that “ideas require men to bring them to earth.”

In attempting to restore one
GARY ROSEN, *here making his first appearance in COMMENTARY*, is a doctoral candidate in political philosophy at Harvard University.

great man to his proper historical place, Brookhiser does not mean to revive the Washington cult of the 19th century. Nor does he mean to reconstruct and defend every important decision of Washington's career. Rather, in this slender volume, he offers a “moral biography” of the first President: an analysis of the extraordinary but altogether human traits that made him so indispensable to the early republic. Aiming to write “in the tradition of Plutarch,” whose accounts of noble Greeks and Romans were a formative influence on the American Founders themselves, Brookhiser tries to give us a portrait that will continue to instruct us today—a task at which he succeeds, but not completely.

THE FIRST part of *Founding Father* is taken up by historical narrative. Brookhiser reminds us that Washington personally dominated American public life for nearly a quarter-century, a longer period than *any* other figure in our history. As Commander of the Continental Army from 1775 until peace with Britain was concluded in 1783, as president of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787, and as chief executive from 1789 to 1797, he oversaw the long struggle from independence to nationhood. Entering the political realm as a celebrated soldier, he left as the most admired of civilians—no mean feat in an age equally capable of producing an autocrat like Bonaparte.

Washington's awareness of his own problematic role in establishing a republican political order provides the central theme of Brookhiser's biographical sketch. Time and again, Washington turned away from opportunities for personal aggrandizement to demonstrate his devotion to popular, civilian rule. The episodes are familiar but worth rehearsing: his resignation of command immediately after the signing of the Treaty of Paris; his rebukes to

those who whispered to him suggestively of monarchy; his reluctance to reenter public life after his military career; and, finally, his insistence on leaving the presidency after his second term. “Washington's last service to his country,” Brookhiser rightly observes, “was to stop serving.”

What, then, was the character of the man behind these deeds? This question lies at the heart of *Founding Father*, and Brookhiser begins to answer it in an unusual but illuminating way: he describes the raw elements with which nature endowed Washington—most particularly, great physical stature and an irascible temper. Washington displayed the former to striking effect in such activities as riding and dancing; the latter he directed into the channels of courage and spirited determination. By means of both, he learned how to make the “sensual impact” necessary to lead.

As for Washington's “second”



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nature—the habits and precepts that guided his conduct—Brookhiser properly rejects the notion, favored by many students of the founding era, that he was some kind of self-styled Roman throwback, a Cato in cocked hat and breeches. Washington no doubt did draw inspiration from the public-spiritedness and self-control of the ancients, but their virtues were too “inhumane” to be his standard. A *liberal* republic required an ethic of a different sort.

Washington found this ethic, Brookhiser plausibly claims, in the “Rules of Civility,” a long set of principles that for years instructed English schoolboys. Some of these rules, which Washington copied out in his own hand as a young man, have not aged well: “Kill no vermin, or fleas, lice, ticks, etc., in the sight of others”; “Spit not in the fire.” But many more reflect the timeless demands of social intercourse in a regime based on the idea of political equality: “Every action done in company ought to be done with some sign of respect to those who are present”; “Artificers and persons of low degree” should be treated “with affability and courtesy, without arrogance.” For Washington, Brookhiser notes, politeness was “the first form of politics.”

BROOKHISER DOES not shrink from examining some of the more troubling aspects of Washington’s character and principles. Here, however, one wishes he had probed more deeply. He finds nothing objectionable, for example, in Washington’s seeming obsession with reputation and role-playing. If we today “worry about our authenticity—about whether our presentation reflects who we ‘really’ are”—18th-century Americans

attended more to the outside story and were less avid to drive putty knives between the outer and inner man. . . . Every man

had a character to maintain; every man was a character actor.

Yet is concentration on the “outside story,” on the opinions of others, always so admirable a quality in a leader, even a democratic one? One senses a forerunner of today’s political spin control in Washington’s query to an adviser shortly before the Constitutional Convention: “[I]nform me confidentially what the public expectation is on this head, that is, whether I will, or ought to be there.”

A similar concern for popular standing can be seen at other key points in Washington’s career, from his earliest days of command in the French and Indian War to his acceptance of the presidency. In the end, of course, Washington usually did what he considered right rather than what was sure to win applause. But the tension between the two might have been explored more fully by Brookhiser, especially as it sheds light on the distressing spectacle of our own politics, in which polling and pandering have been elevated to the status, respectively, of science and art.

Brookhiser’s “moral biography” is also too easy on Washington’s parsimonious view of religion. Though a firm advocate of freedom of conscience, Washington had difficulty describing an affirmative role for religion in American life. He neither inspired personal religious devotion in others nor successfully attached the national cause to some transcendent purpose, as Lincoln would later do. Instead, one often detects in him the cold instrumentalism of the Enlightenment, as in the following passage from the Farewell Address:

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who

should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them.

Though Brookhiser finds room to praise the “novel ways” in which Washington invoked the Bible and religious belief, a more pointed judgment has been offered by the scholar Harry V. Jaffa: “[T]here is no trace of reverence in Washington’s discussion of the need for reverence; the sacred is treated [by him] as a necessity of the profane.”

THE BOOK closes with Brookhiser’s meditation on Washington’s status as “the father” of our country. Here, unfortunately, he lets an occasional tendency to psychoanalyze get the better of him. Because Americans today are no longer sure what real fathers do, we are supposedly unable to accept the notion of a political father: “This may be the deepest source of our distance from him—the resentment and puzzlement that come from being let go.” Washington, by contrast, conferred a great gift on his political progeny precisely by allowing himself “to let go,” to be “taken into the country’s mind—internalized as an object.”

Thankfully, this is not Brookhiser’s final word on Washington as father. Returning to his Plutarchan model, he urges us to emulate our first President—to curb and direct our passions, to treat our fellow citizens with civility and respect, and, above all, to perform the duties of free government no less energetically than we claim its rights. While others have busied themselves exposing and deconstructing Washington, and ascribing every conceivable injustice to him and his contemporaries, it is truly refreshing to be reminded what the life of our founding father still has to teach us.

Judge Not . . .

Guilty: The Collapse of Criminal Justice

by Harold J. Rothwax

Random House. 238 pp. \$23.00

Reviewed by
Walter Olson

IN DETROIT, a rapist held fourteen-year-old Angela Skinner captive in his apartment, threatening to shoot her if she tried to escape. When police broke down a padlocked gate to free her, she led them to a closet where the man kept his guns. The rapist was convicted, but on appeal a federal court excluded the weapons from evidence and overturned his conviction because the police had obtained Angela's permission alone to look in the closet, and not his.

To much of the American public, stories like this are familiar, and infuriating: ever since the Warren Court proclaimed a series of new rights for criminal defendants in the 1960's and 1970's, the bad guys have gotten off on technicalities and crime rates have soared. Yet members of the legal establishment see things differently. Tales like Angela's, they say, are atypical; the new constitutional protections undercut relatively few prosecutions, and in any case the origins of the crime wave lie outside the legal system. Thus, a 1988 American Bar Association (ABA) report complains that "the public mistakenly looks to the criminal-justice system to eliminate the crime problem," and contrasts that unlettered view with the perspective held by "professionals," like the ABA's own members, who know the courts play "a more limited role in crime control and crime prevention."

WALTER OLSON, a new contributor, is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and the author of *The Litigation Explosion: What Happened When America Unleashed the Lawsuit*.

The ABA's view has become a bit less tenable with the appearance of *Guilty: The Collapse of Criminal Justice*. Harold Rothwax, a judge in the New York State courts for the past 25 years, is nothing if not an experienced observer of the Warren Court doctrines in action, and he reports that they do in fact pose a big obstacle to putting malefactors behind bars. What makes Rothwax's testimony all the more piquant is his background: before joining the bench he practiced as a criminal-defense attorney for twelve years and also served as vice chairman of the New York Civil Liberties Union, a central shrine for the veneration of the Warren Court.

Guilty starts in familiar territory—the *Miranda* decision requiring police to advise arrestees of their right to remain silent; the exclusionary rule, which directs a judge to suppress even highly probative evidence when the police have stepped over a line to acquire it; and the modern trend toward excluding confessions given in police custody because they may have been coerced. Rothwax then goes on to explore less well-known topics, like the state statutes that enforce the constitutional guarantee of a speedy trial. In one egregious example, a Brooklyn man, charged with shooting his landlord, was apprehended after skipping two court hearings but was then let go on the grounds that the state had deprived him of his right to a speedy trial by failing to be sufficiently diligent in trying to catch him.

To Rothwax, the problem with the Warren Court's innovations is not only that they occasionally let the guilty go free; they also make the process numbingly cumbersome for everyone else. As a result, the difference between an outrageous marathon like the O.J. Simpson trial and the average court case is mostly one of degree, not of kind. Not everyone can afford a Dream Team, but even

humble defendants, laments Rothwax, can watch judges "sit[ting] by helplessly while attorneys are visibly engaged in an attempt to twist or foreclose the truth."

Current search-and-seizure doctrine abets this situation by leaving it hopelessly unclear when police actions will or will not be upheld in court. This, in turn, results in lengthy disputes that grind down the will and ability of prosecutors to prosecute. "If," Rothwax writes, "a street cop took a sabbatical and holed himself up in a library for six months doing nothing but studying the law on search and seizure," he would still not know how to obey the law—even if the state's chief justice agreed to ride along in the back seat of the patrol car to offer advice.

IN STYLE and in tone, *Guilty* is closely modeled on Philip K. Howard's successful *The Death of Common Sense*.^{*} Like Howard, Rothwax excels at storytelling while sometimes ducking hard issues by an appeal to "common sense," a concept that seems these days to serve much the same interpretive function some Protestant theologies once assigned to "inner light." The book is a quick read, concealing artful organization beneath a seemingly rambling surface, and in style it is admirably clear and direct, though occasionally falling into cliché or solecism. The fact that it is without source notes, bibliography, or even an index may tempt some readers to dismiss *Guilty* as a kind of talk-show appearance between hard covers; it is not.

As for Rothwax's concrete recommendations, they are not really as radical as one might conclude from the peals of outrage that have greeted this book from some quarters, most notably lawyers working the defense side. For instance, Rothwax favors sharp cuts in the number of peremptory challenges

^{*}Reviewed in COMMENTARY by Marc M. Arkin, July 1995.

to jurors, an idea embraced by many other reformers as well. His proposal to allow juries to draw adverse inferences from a defendant's silence, outlandish as it may sound to contemporary ears, would do no more than restore American law to where it stood as recently as 1965. A sharper break from the past is his suggestion that we drop the requirement of unanimity among jurors, in favor of 11-1 or even 10-2 verdicts. Unfortunately, the main effect of such a change might be less to avert hung juries than to reduce the amount of time juries spend in deliberation—not necessarily a desirable objective.

Rothwax also makes a strong case for reform of "discovery" statutes. These require prosecutors to hand over information in their possession—witness lists, recordings and notes of interviews, and the like—to the defense before trial. In the old days, the defense would have a right to such material only if it tended to exonerate the accused. Newer laws require far more material to be handed over, at penalty of a mistrial, in order to avoid surprise or "ambush."

These laws, however, routinely encourage defense attorneys to tailor their stories so as to fit the contents of prosecution files. "We'll devise a defense," said O.J. Simpson attorney Robert Shapiro, "once

we know what the state has to offer." In Judge Rothwax's own court, a gunman initially claimed that he had not been the one who shot at a busload of hasidic students on the Brooklyn Bridge; then, having been positively identified, he claimed to have shot in self-defense; then, after it was established that the students had been unarmed, he fell back on an insanity defense. Similarly, a burglar-rapist initially claimed his victim had voluntarily dated him and consented to sex; when it was revealed that she spoke not a word of English, he revised his story to say that he had not been in the room with her at all. Of course, in all such cases a jury hears only the final version.

In interviews and news stories, Rothwax has emphasized that he does not regard his book as hewing to any particular ideological line, and in fact he does not go as far in his proposals for reform as many conservative writers on crime. Thus, he does not object in principle to the exclusionary rule, and his hopes of clarifying search-and-seizure doctrine leave him agreeing with the "result" of most current Supreme Court law, if not its "reasoning." His chapter on plea bargaining defends a practice which has been assailed by other analysts of the criminal-justice system.

MUCH OF Rothwax's case boils down to a plea for wider judicial discretion; everything, he says, should have an exception "so far as is reasonable." In one sense, such latitude is long overdue. After the Simpson debacle, almost everyone (except trial lawyers) would be happy if judges took a firmer hand in managing trials: kept questioning on track; cracked down on attempts to manipulate the jury; and so forth.

But Rothwax also favors widening the discretion of judges to *interpret* the law. For example, instead of the current "mechanical" deadlines for speedy trials, he would give judges permission to throw out unreasonably stale cases and send the rest forward. There are many objections to such a change, among them that it could end by widening the gap between hard-line judges (who would probably tend to throw out fewer cases) and soft-line ones.

Yet, whatever one thinks about any one of Rothwax's proposals, the portrait he paints of the criminal-justice system is a damning one. Many now agree that it is time to rethink the Warren Court legacy: if the publication of *Guilty* moves us toward the day when we can begin to debate which parts of that legacy should be discarded and which retained, it will have made a lasting contribution.

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